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CHICAGO

THE
VALUE OF X

*A Commencement Play in Three Acts
and a Prologue*

By EDITH F. A. U. PAINTON
" "
Author of "The Prize Essay"



BECKLEY-CARDY COMPANY
CHICAGO

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no. 1

CHARACTERS

PROFESSOR S. B. SCHUYLER.....	<i>The Principal</i>
MISS HENRIETTA IRVING.....	<i>The English Teacher</i>
MADemoisELLE FLEURETTE.....	<i>The French Teacher</i>
MRS. SAMANTHA GREEN.....	<i>Mother of Melchisedek</i>
THE SENIORS:—	
DAVID FARRINGTON.....	<i>The Class President</i>
HARVEY GOODELL.....	<i>The Class Orator</i>
LAWRENCE LEONARD.....	<i>The Class Dreamer</i>
IRA SELF.....	<i>The Class Dude</i>
ROGER HAYNES.....	<i>The Class Capitalist</i>
MILDRED SPENCER.....	<i>The Class Beauty</i>
JOSIE STOCKBRIDGE.....	<i>The Class Gossip</i>
EDITH AUSTIN.....	<i>The Literary Maid</i>
LENORE CARROLL.....	<i>The Junior Interrogation Point</i>
MELCHISEDEK GREEN.....	<i>A Freshman—X, “It”</i>

TIME: *Nineteen Hundred and Now*

PLACE: *Here, There, or Anywhere*

TIME OF PLAYING: *Two Hours*

SYNOPSIS

The Introduction of X
The Elimination of X
The Value of X

PROLOGUE

Salutatory

ACT I. *The Problem Presented*
ACT II. *The Problem Augmented*
ACT III. *The Problem Solved*

COSTUMES

Modern, as to taste. Mademoiselle Fleurette, very dainty and stylish in appearance. Mrs. Green, ludicrous country get-up. Melchisedek, very fat make-up, with checked suit, gaudy tie, hose, etc.

THE VALUE OF X

PROLOGUE

Salutatory

(Spoken before curtain by EDITH AUSTIN.)

In Blankville lies the scene; the time, to-day;
The players, in fantastical array,
Half fact, half fancy, led by mischief's elves,
Are we—the Class of 19—, ourselves;
The Prologue, too, not rhymed for vulgar gain,
Is brought to you, the first-fruits of our brain.

So much, kind friends, my classmates bid me state
Of what we have for you to-night in wait.
So much for that, then!—while one word I add
That 's half a joyous word, and half a sad;
And that is this: this farce of ours to-day
Is the last role our class can ever play!

And why? Because, when from this stage we pass,
We 'll nevermore on earth meet as a class;
Each one must struggle onward, all alone,
To fight the world and win it for his own;
Each one must turn from all his school-day strife
To solve the problems in the school of life!

And so, as in a fanciful conceit,
The story of school frolics we repeat,
And many facts and fancies bring to vex
The mind that seeks the value of this "X,"
Remember, half is earnest, half is play,
While we are likewise all half sad, half gay.

This speech, kind friends, forget just when you may,
 For, truly, it is quite too long to say;
 And so, I mean to add just one word more,
 The sweet word, Welcome! And though o'er and o'er
 We might repeat it, we could not express
 The welcome that each glad face must confess.

We 'll do our best to act such parts to-night
 As you may see and hear with true delight;
 We 'll do our very prettiest to repay
 You all for coming, sure that you will say
 That we 've done well, and honored this old hall—
 For which we thank you! Welcome! Welcome all!

ACT I

SCENE: *Professor Schuyler's office. Desk at center back, chair and blackboard behind it. Four chairs of various kinds on left side of room. Waste-paper basket at right of desk. Large hassock in front of desk. Divan at right. Entrances at right and left.*

IRA and ROGER are discovered seated on divan. As curtain rises HARVEY is discovered taking a seat between them.

Enter EDITH, Left.

EDITH. That 's right, Harvey. Be sure and keep those pugilists properly separated. Aren't you fellows ever going to "kiss and make up?" [*Walks behind desk to blackboard.*] Girls never fight that way.
 [*Begins to scribble on board the old stanza:*

*"Let dogs delight to bark and bite,
 For 'tis their nature to;
 Let little kittens quarrel and fight,
 For God has made them so:*

*But, children, you should never let
Your angry passions rise;
Your little hands were never made
To tear each other's eyes."*

Takes plenty of time at this, pauses now and then to erase errors or to look at boys over shoulder. The dialogue goes on uninterruptedly, the others not paying any attention to her action.]

IRA. No, they just use their tongues! [EDITH turns and sticks out tongue at him. He looks at boys triumphantly, and they grin and nod.] But I'd be decent if Haynes would!

ROGER. Nonsense! I never have the least sign of trouble with anybody else. It's all Self.

IRA [*springing up*]. I say it's you!

ROGER [*springing up*]. And I say it's you!

IRA [*shaking fist*]. You!

ROGER [*shaking fist*]. You!

IRA [*advancing on him*]. You'd better take—

ROGER [*advancing and interrupting*]. And you'd better stop—

HARVEY [*stepping between them*]. That's enough, boys! Cut it out! It's always best not to start anything you can't finish!

Enter DAVE, Left.

DAVE. Which of these fellows is in training for the ring?

HARVEY. Both, from all present appearances. Say, Farrington, if we had our electrical machine here, you could take one by the ear [*takes hold of IRA'S ear, while DAVE takes hold of ROGER'S*], and I could take the other by the ear—[IRA and ROGER scream]—Shocking, eh?

EDITH. It would possibly cure them of their game-cock tendencies, anyway!

DAVE. Yes, just as it cured Goodell of parting his hair in the middle.

HARVEY. Cut it!

DAVE [*innocently*]. Your hair? Now, have I ever said one word about taking up the barber's trade? It does need cutting, but— [*Shakes head, then turns to IRA and ROGER, who are still glaring at each other.*] Better go 'way back and sit down, little boys. We can't stand for that sort o' thing in this class, you know.

[*Boys resume seats reluctantly. HARVEY and DAVE cross to Left.*]

IRA [*while taking seat*]. Just as you say, of course, Farrington, but really, now, I think—

HARVEY [*sitting on bench, L.*]. Don't! Thinking is against the rules of this institution. Not allowed under any circumstances. [*DAVE sits by him.*]

EDITH [*turning from board and pointing to verse, which she has now completed*]. There's your lesson for to-day, little boys! I would advise you to study it well.

IRA }
ROGER } Humph!

Enter JOSIE, Left.

JOSIE. Everybody here?

DAVE. Everybody except the ones who are somewhere else!

JOSIE. I wonder what Professor Schuyler wanted us all to meet here for! [*Pause. No answer.*] Nobody know?

ROGER [*giggling*]. Perhaps *he* does!

[*JOSIE walks to desk, seats herself in the Professor's chair, and fingers pencils, papers, etc., while she talks.*]

JOSIE. I think he wants to advise us!

ALL [*perplexed*]. Advise?

Enter MILDRED, Left.

MILDRED. To what do we owe the honor?

[Boys all rise, each eagerly offering her his seat.]

EDITH. Just what we were wondering, Mildred. *[Sits on hassock, front of desk.]*

[MILDRED accepts DAVE'S seat with sweet smile. The others resume seats disappointed. DAVE crosses to R., sits between IRA and ROGER.]

JOSIE. About our future, you know! What we are going to do, and all that!

IRA. More likely he 's going to lecture us.

HARVEY *[in consternation]*. Lecture us?—us? But why? Who 's been doing what? *[Looks around inquiringly.]*

ALL. Not guilty!

Enter LAWRENCE, Left.

LAWRENCE. I hain't be'n doin' nothin', but I won't do it no more!

EDITH. Except murdering the English language!

DAVE. And smashing all the ten commandments of grammar! But, see here, Lawrence, where 's Prof.?

LAWRENCE. Prof.? *[Begins to search pockets.]* I declare, now—did I lose that man somewhere on the street? Prof.! Prof.! Where are you, Prof.? *[Turns pockets inside out, shakes kerchief, etc.]* Not there! Must be lost, strayed, or stolen! Have to advertise! *[Sighs ruefully; sits chair, L.]*

JOSIE *[pounds on desk with pencil]*. But listen to me! There 's all kinds of news afloat! Professor Mason has resigned;—Miss Cameron 's going to Lincoln;—there are ten new Freshies enrolled this week from goodness knows where, when, how, or why;—we 're going to have a test in psychology to-morrow—

ALL. To-morrow!

JOSIE. Don't interrupt! 'Tis n't good manners! The Juniors are planning a big excursion up the river, picnic at Central Park, and return by moonlight—

ALL. When?

JOSIE. Did n't I tell you not to interrupt? Of course, if you don't want to hear the news—

ALL. But—

JOSIE. You need n't listen!

ALL. We do!

JOSIE. Well, why did n't you give me time to get to the "when," then? It's going to be on the eighteenth—start from the North Bridge at 7—

ROGER. A. M.?

IRA. Or P. M.?

JOSIE. Humph! [*Drops book with crash.*] I give it up!

EDITH. "The flow of inspiration dies
As stormy floods of flame arise."

MILDRED [*haughtily*]. I do wish, Edith, you would rid yourself of that disagreeable habit of incorrect quotation. If you can't be original, be—nothing!

JOSIE. That's me!

EDITH. But that *was* original. Think anybody else could throw such stuff together?

JOSIE. O say! The Sophomores are going to elect a new president.

ALL. Who?

JOSIE. I suppose you mean "Whom?" They want Jim Harrison.

HARVEY. Do the Sophs know they want him?

JOSIE. Of course. He told them so.

MILDRED. What they can possibly want of that vulgar boy—

JOSIE. Listen! Have you seen the new French teacher? She's adorable! The Board hired her just to give us the genuine Parisian accent, you know, and she accepted so we could give her the genuine American slang, you see, and—

EDITH. What 's her name?

JOSIE. I was just getting to that! It 's Mademoiselle Fleurette. Front name unknown. But, say, she 's a regular wax doll, and the swellest thing outside of *La Mode* you ever heard of in the fashion line!

ROGER. She means clothes-line, fellows!

JOSIE. But say, classmates, honestly now, is n't it about time we were talking of our future prospects. If you expect me to write a prophecy, for goodness sake, give me some sort of a thread to spin a decent yarn out of!

DAVE. But what 's a prophet for if not to tell us what we don't know about the days to be?

EDITH. "To be or not to be, that is the question!"

HARVEY. But Josie 's right! We ought to begin to think just a little, when the longed-for, dreaded day is only three little months ahead!

EDITH
LAWRENCE } [*together*]. Longed-for?
DAVE }

JOSIE
ROGER } [*together*]. Dreaded?
IRA }

MILDRED. Speak for yourself, Harvey.

HARVEY. Exactly, classmates, exactly. Both longed-for and dreaded. Do we not all long with an unspeakable longing for the day of our emancipation—[*Rises while speaking, gesturing elaborately, and speaking with exaggerated emphasis*—the day of unalloyed, unadulterated freedom—freedom from study, from examinations, from constant, unrelieved supervision and domination? [*Looks around group challenging a denial.*]

JOSIE
ROGER } [*together*]. We do!
IRA }

MILDRED. Roger and Ira actually on the same side of the fence!

DAVE [*with great show of anxiety*]. Do you both feel well, boys?

LAWRENCE. Say, Goodell, do all those big jaw-breakers mean Miss Irving?

DAVE. They do, little boy!

LAWRENCE. I'll make a note of them. [*Takes note-book and pencil from pocket and writes busily whenever HARVEY gets off a big word.*]

HARVEY [*ignoring interruption*]. And yet, "to the contrary, notwithstanding," is there one single one among us who does not dread with an undeniable, unquenchable dread, the black hour of our inevitable separation; the time when no more about the campus will our lightsome voices ring; the days when our faithful instructors will listen in vain for our ever-ready and ever-competent, and all-wise responses in the classroom? Do we not all dread the plunge into the cold and untried world—the inevitable—

LAWRENCE. You said "inevitable" once before, Harvey.

HARVEY [*glaring at him*]. —unavoidable battle with the valiant, vital forces of actual endeavor—the contest of strenuous, indomitable life in the world of desperate and daring men? Do we not, I say?

EDITH }
MILDRED } [*together*]. We do.
DAVE }

LAWRENCE. Don't know what you're driving at with all that rigmarole, Goodell, but if Dave does, I guess I do, too!

IRA. You sure are some orator, Goodell. Where do you get wise to all that dope?

DAVE. Yes, you do yourself and the class great credit, my son!

JOSIE. But he makes us work our brains overtime to understand what he's trying to say.

HARVEY [*bowing to each in turn with exaggerated grace and courtesy*]. Thank you, one and all. My father used to be an insurance agent! [*Sits.*]

DAVE. But, seriously, boys and girls, I've been thinking a whole lot lately about our future prospects—

LAWRENCE. Ahem!

DAVE [*calmly*]. I've been wondering where we would all be, and what we would all be, in, say, twenty or thirty years from now.

IRA. That's dead easy. All old men and women—in the poorhouse!

ROGER. Or the pen!

IRA. I hope you mean nothing personal, Roger Haynes! [*Rises indignantly.*]

ROGER [*rising excitedly*]. If the cap fits, you may put it on, Ira Self!

IRA. If anybody in this bunch finds the pen, I could put my finger on the lad right now! [*All rise excitedly, watching the fray.*]

ROGER. So could I, if I wanted to soil it!

IRA [*shaking fist*]. You'd better—

ROGER [*shaking fist*]. And you'd better—

DAVE [*stepping between them*]. And you'd both better—sit down and cool off. [*Pushes them into seats and sits between them.*] No more war here. We're for arbitration. [*All sit.*]

EDITH. Isn't war a terrible thing?

JOSIE. Should say so. Wars make history, and don't you just hate history? If it was n't for war now—

DAVE. Well, if you boys are out of danger again, let's try and be serious for half a minute and unburden our minds. I declare I've been so busy studying—

LAWRENCE. Grinding!

DAVE. That I've only been half a president, and haven't had a chance to hear half your plans. When I was first

elected president, Professor Schuyler says to me, "Far-
rington, it means something to be president. It makes
you responsible for that subtle thing known as the
'standard of the class.' What you stand for, the class as
a whole will stand for!" I've thought about that a lot,
and wished I was worthy. Anyway, let's be alive, and
try to take a little human interest in one another. What
does everybody intend to do, anyway? [*Looks around
at each, inquiringly. Nobody speaks. All busy think-
ing.*] Well? [*Still silence.*] Don't all speak at once.
It might shatter my nerves.

JOSIE. Suppose you open the meeting yourself, Dave. Wait
till I get my note-book and pencil out, for I'm going to
need this dope for my prophecy.

MILDRED. Why, you aren't going to tell the *truth* in that
prophecy, are you?

JOSIE. Sure, if I can get next to any! Drive on, Dave.

DAVE. Why, I—I—

LAWRENCE. Drive on, Mr. President. You're in for it all
right now. Own up to your dark and deadly plots.

DAVE. O well! I don't know as I mind. Father says I
must go to college, and give the wise men there a chance
to make a wonderful, wonderful something or other out
of me. I've been a drag on the family purse a long
time, but he insists on giving me this much more. But I
don't know— [*Sighs.*] I don't believe the fellows
who translated the Bible got that passage just right. It's
the *need* of money, not the love of it, that's the "root of
all evil."

ROGER [*with superior air*]. I never noticed it.

IRA. Poor Roger! If his dad's coin should ever strike in
on him, he'd be sure to die of gold fever on the brain.
Most of us notice it only too keenly, don't you know?

DAVE [*hastily, fearing trouble*]. How about *your* "sweet
bye-and-bye," Goodell?

HARVEY. Not in a position to state, Farrington. Can't count my coin until I procure another penny to jingle with the one in my pocket now. Then I'll know that one and one make two. But—O what's the use? My ambition is to be a lawyer—

ROGER. Wondered why you were practicing the lie so much, Goodell!

LAWRENCE. That's what's hatched out all those jaw-cracking words, eh?

Enter MADEMOISELLE FLEURETTE, Right. All rise.

MDLLE. FLEURETTE [*uncertainly, looking around*]. Is Monsieur Schuy-ler—

HARVEY. Not yet!

MDLLE. FLEURETTE. In the—leebra-ree—maybe so—Oui? (pronounced "we.")

DAVE. Maybe he—but not *we*!

MDLLE. FLEURETTE. O dees Engleesh,—it ees such a funniness—but it is so—delightsome to see so many pupils of me—all so busy—[*uses many gestures*]—

JOSIE. Busy? Not guilty!

MDLLE. FLEURETTE [*innocently*]. Geelty? O no, no, no! You not be geelty! You are alive children—bon! Au revoir! I find heem! [*Bows low with much smiling and exits R.*]

JOSIE. Is n't she too delicious? Well, let's proceed with our proceedings, I'm getting a fine start on my prophecy. [*All resume seats.*]

IRA. Well, then, who's going to do what?

Enter LENORE, Left.

LENORE. Morning!

JOSIE. Why, Lenore Caroll, did you know that the new theatrical—

LENORE [*not heeding*]. Where 's Professor?

LAWRENCE. Search me!

DAVE. No use, Lawrence. Your own search was quite convincing.

LENORE. What are all you Seniors doing here?

HARVEY. Sitting.

LENORE [*impatiently*]. But why? [*Pause. All shake heads.*] Having a meeting? [*All nod.*] What for? [*All shake heads.*] Going to have a picnic? [*All shake heads.*] Party? [*All shake heads.*] Play? [*All shake heads.*] Game? [*All shake heads.*] Dance? [*All shake heads.*] Then what in the world—Oh, I bet I know! You're having an election! [*All shake heads.*] O well, if you don't want to tell, you need n't. It's a Senior privilege, I suppose! Had your class election? [*All nod.*] Who's president?

ALL [*except DAVE, who drops head*]. Dave Farrington!

LENORE. Good work! Did n't suppose you had sense enough to elect him. Is he going to have the valedictory, too? [*All nod.*] Who's historian? [*All shake heads.*] Haven't you elected one yet? [*All shake heads.*] Why didn't you choose one in your Freshman year? [*All shake heads.*] Don't you think it's better to have them in touch with everything that's doing through the full course? How many in your class?

MILDRED. Can't you count?

LENORE. What's the use? What you don't know, ask! Got a prophet? [*All nod toward JOSIE.*] Josie? She'll be a dandy! She's the only real human being in the bunch of you. Got your dresses ready, girls? What you going to have? What you going to wear, boys?

HARVEY. Clothes—if we can manage to raise the price!

LENORE. Humph! And may a humble-minded Junior venture to ask—

DAVE. All hail to the Junior Interrogation Point!

LENORE. Gracious! When did you Seniors get so wise?
What 's an Interrogation Point?

LAWRENCE. A little crooked-nosed, big-headed thing that asks questions!

MILDRED. But is supposed to put an *end* to them. Lenore never does.

JOSIE. It 's always facing the wrong way, too—Junior style, you know!

HARVEY. Getting everything started wrong-end to.

DAVE. Going back to the beginning—

LAWRENCE. Beginning? That 's the Freshman class.

DAVE. To ask it all over again.

EDITH. Quite correct. That 's Lenore!

And we Seniors from her questions, poured upon us by
the score,

Shall be rescued—nevermore!

LENORE. What an Edithic remark! Dear me! Shall I ever be a Senior? *Is there any hope for me? Can I live through the long year to come? Are Seniors merely human?*

DAVE. Question!

LENORE. Sure enough, *it is a question!* Who can answer?

EDITH. And Echo answers "Who?"

Positions of Class are now as follows:

Right Exit.

Left Exit.

JOSIE [*behind desk*]

EDITH [*on hassock, front of desk*]

Divan { IRA
DAVE
ROGER

MILDRED [*easy chair*]

LAWRENCE [*easy chair*]

HARVEY [*straight chair*]

LENORE stands in center of stage and looks round the group scornfully.

LENORE. Humph!

[She now points her finger at each in turn, as she goes around the circle, speaking but one word for each, in "counting out" style. Begins with ROGER, and goes around the group twice.]

Monkey — monkey — barrel — of — beer! — How — many — monkeys — are — there — here? — One — two — three — out — goes —

[As she starts around the circle the second time, each one in his turn rises indignantly as she points to her or him, and she dodges back one step at a time, until, by the time she reaches HARVEY, on the word "goes," all are standing and make for her threateningly. She backs to Exit L., laughing mockingly. All this action must be very rapid and spirited.]

LENORE. Me! [Bows low, exits Left.]

MILDRED. The audacious thing! [Resumes seat.]

JOSIE [giggling]. Juniors are n't things, Mildred. Lenore's feminine—not neuter. [Sits divan.]

MILDRED. No, I suppose we could n't properly call her "it."

EDITH. She thinks she's "It" all right—like all the Juniors! [Sits beside JOSIE on divan.]

[IRA sits hassock, takes out pocket-mirror and comb, and begins to arrange his hair, smooth his face, etc. HARVEY sits beside MILDRED.]

DAVE [taking seat in straight chair beside HARVEY]. Well, shall we resume the interesting discussion of our important selves?

[ROGER goes to resume seat on divan, sees the girls there, bows in apology, goes to desk and leans on it,—left side. LAWRENCE goes to resume his seat, sees HARVEY in it, and drops to floor at DAVE'S feet, in lounging position.]

LAWRENCE [*lazily*]. Steam up, somebody!

DAVE. You seem to have the floor, Roger. How about it?

ROGER. Don't suppose I'll ever do much of anything. Won't have to, you know. May go on Wall Street sometime with dad.

HARVEY. Well, Self, if you have succeeded in combing your charming locks quite to your satisfaction, and in admiring your handsome self sufficiently to meet the needs of the moment, we'd rather like to hear what you expect to do with yourself—as time rolls on.

IRA [*quickly putting comb and mirror in pocket*]. O really now, is time going to roll on? [*Rises, smoothing trousers, picking off imaginary threads, etc.*]

HARVEY. They say so!

DAVE. It seems to be a habit it's got.

JOSIE. Did you think it was going to stop entirely because the Class of 19— was to be no more?

IRA. [*Swaggers down toward front. ROGER takes his seat.*] Well, I think I shall—[*hesitates near front, standing and looking thoughtfully at floor*—get married!

DAVE. That goes without saying. Were you thinking of joining the Mormons and going into the business wholesale?

IRA. Mormons? No! Progressive matrimony is so much more interesting, don't you know, than polygamy! That's really vulgar, don't you think?

HARVEY. But what for a business—a living—a career?

IRA [*surprised*]. Why, if I marry a rich woman, or two, I—I—but I suppose a fellow does need some kind of a profession, just for the looks of the thing. But I—I—I hardly know, don't you know? I've been so busy, you see—I really have—that I've had no time to consider the matter at all. I haven't, really. Girls do take up so much of a fellow's time, you know!

BOYS [*all*]. Humph!

HARVEY. Strikes me you 'd better go in for the medical profession, Self. All the girls would be crazy to get themselves sick or injured so they could have you for their pet doctor, and all that sort of thing, you know.

IRA [*walking slowly to him*]. Not such a bad idea that, Goodell. I 'll think about it—I really will. [*Goes to resume seat, sees ROGER has it, and crosses to divan, sitting between girls.*]

DAVE. I hope he 'd know how to keep his patients from catching whooping-cough!

HARVEY. Probably keep the whole community wearing bags of asafœtida round their necks all the time.

IRA. What 's asafœtida?

JOSIE. Just plain everyday "fetty," little boy. Like it?

IRA. Ugh! [*With wry face.*]

DAVE. Have to wear a clothespin on your nose while it 's on you, you know. And it 's a case of "We never speak as we pass by" with all your friends.

HARVEY. O well, there 's more than one way of preventing diseases you don't know how to cure, Self. Don't get discouraged.

DAVE. Yes, don't you remember how Lawrence's folks kept him locked up at home when the measles were in town? All the measly boys broke out—but not Lawrence! [*LAWRENCE pretends to be asleep.*]

IRA. Should say not! 'T would have to be a mighty slow disease that Lawrence Leonard could catch!

EDITH [*mischievously*].

The measles were let loose in Blankville,
Which certainly made Leonard wince;
But he moved far too slowly to catch them,
And he has n't caught anything since!

BOYS [*chanting in concert*]. And he has n't caught anything since!

MILDRED. Well, I'd rather see him that way than with the reputation of being too fast for cultured society that some boys I know have made for themselves.

BOYS [*all but LAWRENCE jump up excitedly and face her anxiously*]. Me?

MILDRED. O nothing personal, boys. Sit down and keep cool. Imitate the calm demeanor of Lawrence. A guilty conscience, you know—

[*Girls laugh teasingly as boys sit down, looking embarrassed. IRA slips behind ROGER, and takes hassock. When ROGER sits, he planks himself down on IRA'S lap.*]

IRA. One at a time, Haynes. My turn next.

ROGER [*jumping up angrily*]. Now see here, if you think I'll be—

IRA [*jumping up*]. And if you think I'll let you sit on me—

ROGER. And if you—

IRA. And if you—

JOSIE [*takes IRA by arm*]. That'll do, Ira. Come back and behave.

MILDRED. Take your hassock, Roger, and be decent.

IRA. But he—

ROGER. And he—

DAVE. And *we*—insist. [*Boys sit, glaring at each other.*]
Come, Lawrence, wake up and reveal to us your plans for future glory. [*Shakes him playfully with foot, but LAWRENCE pretends to be asleep.*]

IRA. Bosh! I'll bet all my last year's examination papers that he isn't going to do *anything*—if he can get out of it!

HARVEY. Right you are, Ira! That's Leonard, all right. How in the world does he manage to pass his exams.? Answer me, somebody!

DAVE [*shaking head profoundly*]. I give it up!

ROGER. O he's just naturally wise. Born in him!

DAVE [*sighs*]. Wish I was!

IRA. Yes, if I just hadn't been born so dreadfully handsome—

ALL [*surprised*]. Whew! [*He looks around in surprise.*]

DAVE. Leonard! [*No reply.*] Leonard! [*Still no reply.*]
Leonard, I say! [*Kicks him gently with foot.*] Lawrence
Leonard!

LAWRENCE [*slowly rises, stretching himself lazily*]. Did anybody speak to me?

ROGER. O no! Nobody was even thinking of you. Farrington was just whispering to himself.

DAVE. Well, I like that!

LAWRENCE. I don't. Seems as if you never give a fellow a chance to rest a minute. What did you want, anyway?

HARVEY. Why, we wanted to know what you were going to do.

LAWRENCE. Do? [*All nod.*] Me? [*All nod.*] Well, if that ain't the limit! [*Resumes place.*] I didn't intend to do anything, if you had only let me alone. [*All laugh. He looks around in surprise.*] Well, what's the matter now?

DAVE. We were talking of the future, Leonard. What do you expect to do with yourself after we graduate? Josie wants stuff for her prophecy, and—

LAWRENCE. Oh!—that! [*Sits up on floor.*] Well, I did intend to be some sort of a civil engineer—that is, if I didn't happen to change my mind before I got around to doing anything, you know—

JOSIE. Lazybones!

LAWRENCE [*bows to her*]. Thank you! Bnt since I've been lying here, listening to all of your jabber—pardon me, I mean, of course, your exceedingly interesting conversation,—is that right, Harvey?—I've changed my mind, and decided to go into business.

ALL [*in surprise*]. Business?

LAWRENCE [*nodding lazily*]. Business!

DAVE. But what? Going on Wall Street with Roger?

LAWRENCE [*with grimace*]. Not yet!

ALL. Then what?

LAWRENCE. Speculation.

DAVE. Speculation? [*Boys look at one another wonderingly.*]

JOSIE [*with book and pencil*]. Real estate?

LAWRENCE. Nothing like it! [*Speaks very slowly and teasingly.*] I've decided to buy all of you boys for just what you're really worth—

BOYS [*in disgust*]. Oh!

LAWRENCE. And then—[*Pauses and looks around group mischievously.*]—

GIRLS [*eagerly*]. And then—?

LAWRENCE. Selling them for what they think they're worth, of course!

BOYS [*in disgust*]. Oh!

LAWRENCE. Easiest way to get rich that I know of! Why, I see myself a millionaire riding around in my Cadillac, and sailing my private aeroplane through the skies in just a few short weeks. Great business that! [*Lies back again lazily. Boys signal one another, and make a dash for him, piling on him, football fashion, and pommeling him fiercely.*]

Enter PROFESSOR SCHUYLER, Right.

PROF. SCHUYLER. Well, well! Are you all here?

ALL [*each jumping up and bowing; boys embarrassed, girls amused*]. I am!

PROF. SCHUYLER. Unusual demonstration for my office. A little football practice, perhaps?

DAVE. Er—no—not exactly! You asked to see us all—

PROF. SCHUYLER. Yes, yes! I—er—well, be seated—[*waving hand around room*] anywhere you like. [*They resume places. PROF. SCHUYLER goes to desk and sits.*] I thought this would be an excellent opportunity to discuss with

you some of our plans for the conclusion of this last year of yours—your very last year with us—do you realize it?

JOSIE [*dubiously*]. If we pass!

HARVEY [*confidently*]. Oh, we 'll pass!

PROF. SCHUYLER. Miss Irving is coming— [*Enter MISS IRVING, Right.*] Yes, here she is now,—and Mademoiselle Fleurette, your new French teacher, will look in if possible. They will outline with you some of the necessary work to be covered before commencement.

MISS IRVING. Yes, Seniors, I have prepared a most exhaustive review of the English Authors for these last few weeks. This afternoon, we will take up the life of Alfred Tennyson. Everybody be ready for some good hard work.

ALL [*looking at one another in consternation*]. Murder!

[*Heavy tramping heard outside.*]

MISS IRVING. And to-morrow—

PROF. SCHUYLER. One moment, Miss Irving. I hear somebody at the door.

Enter MRS. GREEN, Left.

MRS. GREEN. Be this the perfesser's office?

PROF. SCHUYLER. Yes, madam, it is. Come right in.

MRS. GREEN. And be you the perfesser?

PROF. SCHUYLER. I am.

MRS. GREEN. Do tell! Who'd ever have thunk it? Why, you don't look as if you knew a blamed bit more than I do. And goodness knows I could n't be perfesser to a spotted cat. But I brung my little boy along, perfesser, er—er—What 's—Your—Name—

PROF. SCHUYLER [*with dignity*]. My name is Schuyler, madam.

MRS. GREEN [*looks around for a chair*]. Scholar?—yes, of course! But I thought you teaching fellers got over being a scholar when you went to perfessering. [*Puzzled.*]

I s'pose it's all right. Maybe you know more 'n you show up for! I brung my little boy along to go to High School. He's got his stiffcut from our school, 'cause the teacher out there said he couldn't learn him another single thing; and now I'm bringing him to you 'cause I never had but one in all the world, and I want him to learn just everything there is to learn in all the world. But [*looks all around room, and then leans nearer* PROF. SCHUYLER *and speaks in confidential tone*] I want you should take awful good care of him, and not let him catch cold, nor study too hard, or nothing like that; for he ain't never been away from his ma before, and I don't know what's going to become of him without having nobody but you to see after him. You don't look very bright yourself, and if that's your wife there—[*looking at* MISS IRVING, *curiously*]

MISS IRVING [*hastily*]. I'll just step into the library, Professor Schuyler, until you are at leisure to continue the discussion. [PROF. SCHUYLER *bows, in confusion, and* MISS IRVING *exits R.*]

PROF. SCHUYLER. That was Miss Irving, the English teacher.

MRS. GREEN. For the land's sakes! Be this a foreign school? I don't want my boy to get mixed up with none o' them foreigners.

PROF. SCHUYLER. Have no fears, madam. This is an American school. Where is your son, madam?

MRS. GREEN [*looks around for chair*]. Oh, he's just outside. My name is Green—Mrs. Samantha Caroline Green. I was named after my father's mother and after my mother's mother, too. I was such a sweet little thing, and they was both so proud of me.

PROF. SCHUYLER. But your son—

MRS. GREEN [*looks around for chair*]. Yes, yes! I was gittin' to him. His name is Melchisedek. It's a Bible name. His pa and me gave him the best name we could

find because we wanted him to be a preacher. But I don't know. The teachers out our way can't learn him any more, and you sure enough don't look as if you could, and—

PROF. SCHUYLER. Where *is* he, madam?

MRS. GREEN. Land's sakes! Didn't I tell you he was outside? What a poor rememberer you be! He's going to board with his aunt,—his pa's half-sister, Emmeline, that married Jonas Weatherby,—we've got the bargain all made. I'm going to give her ten pounds of butter, five dozen eggs, and a fat hen every week while he stays. Melchisedek must have plenty of good feed. It seems like folks in town don't look half-fed. Now, here's you, looking so peaked and skinny—

PROF. SCHUYLER. Madam, there is no more time for preliminaries. If you will call in your son, so he can register—

MRS. GREEN. O yes, sir—yes, sir! I'll call him right this minute. He's a little afraid of strangers. [*Goes door, L.*]

JOSIE [*to class*]. Wonder if she thinks this is a day nursery!

MRS. GREEN [*at door, Left. Calls*]. Come in, Melchisedek. Nobody's going to hurt you. Don't act so bashful.

Enter MELCHISEDEK, grinning bashfully, hands in pockets, chewing gum.

MRS. GREEN [*leading him to desk. He eyes class as he passes*]. Here he is, perfesser. Be good to him, won't you? He's the only one I ever had in all the world.

MELCHISEDEK [*over shoulder*]. Hello, kids! [*They grin at him.*]

PROF. SCHUYLER. [*Eyes him over spectacles.*] Your name, please?

MRS. GREEN. Didn't I jest tell you? His name is Melchisedek—Melchisedek Green.

PROF. SCHUYLER [*irritated*]. Just come around here, Melchisedek, and fill out this blank. [MELCHISEDEK *shambles around behind desk and sits chair with pen and paper.*]

MRS. GREEN. Now, Melchisedek, don't you go to signing no papers till you read 'em.

PROF. SCHUYLER. It's a mere formality of registration, madam,—his name, age, place of birth, parentage, etc.

MRS. GREEN. Humph! I could have told you all that, just as well 's not, and saved the poor boy all that trouble. [*Looks at class.*] Be these my boy's classmates?

PROF. SCHUYLER. O no, no! Those are Seniors. They will be this year's graduating class, if all goes well with them.

MRS. GREEN. Humph! You don't say! Don't none of 'em look half as smart as my Melchisedek! [*Shakes hands with IRA.*] You 'll be good to my boy, won't you?

IRA. Sure! I won't hurt him! Haven't eaten a Freshman this year!

MRS. GREEN [*shaking hands with HARVEY*]. And you, too, little boy?

HARVEY. Certainly, madam, but I 'm no "little boy."

MRS. GREEN. What in the dickens be you, then? [*Harvey shrugs shoulders and drops head. MRS. GREEN turns to ROGER.*] And you, too, young man? [*Speaks the words "young man" patronizingly as one indulging a child.*]

ROGER [*haughtily*]. It is not my custom to practice cruelty to animals.

MRS. GREEN. But I meant—

DAVE [*stepping forward*]. Yes, Mrs. Green. We 'll all be very, very good to Mel—Mel—Mel—[*hesitates, embarrassed.*]

MRS. GREEN. Not Mel—he 's Melchisedek. I won't have him called "Mel," nor "Melly," nor no such nickname. We never have allowed nothing like that, and never will.

DAVE. I beg your pardon, Mrs. Green. I was only trying to recollect the name. It 's such an unusual one—

MRS. GREEN [*pleased*]. Yes, ain't it, now? Melchisedek in the Bible was such a great priest, you know, like we wanted our boy to be—

MELCHISEDEK. Say, ma, where was I born?

MRS. GREEN. Right on the farm, dearie—in the west bedroom in the right-hand wing, upstairs. [*To LAWRENCE*] You look sleepy, young feller. Better take something to wake you up.

MELCHISEDEK. Say, ma, where was you born?

MRS. GREEN. Missouri,—town o' Mulberry,—fifty years ago. [*Looks at girls critically, one at a time.*] Dear me! but you are sure the fancy looking girls! I ain't jest sure I like to have my little boy around such swell petticoats. [*To JOSIE*] You ain't near so good lookin' as t'other one, be you? But you may have jest as much in your brains.

JOSIE. We'll try to take good care of your little boy, Mrs. Green.

MRS. GREEN. Yes, I hope you will. If he jest gets enough to eat, and keeps himself from ketchin' cold, I reckon he'll git along all right. I'm glad I saw what bright looking children he'd be runnin' around with. I won't be so worried about him. [*Looks up at clock.*] O gracious sakes! If it ain't time for me to be gittin' your pa's dinner on the table this blessed minute, and me fourteen miles from the farm without a bell on. I just must hurry off. Come and kiss me good-bye, Melchisedek. Ma's got to go. [*MELCHISEDEK comes and kisses her; loud smack. She wipes eyes on shawl, he also takes out big red handkerchief and wipes eyes, finally blowing nose vigorously.*] Now, you will be a good boy, won't you? And always keep dressed warm, and eat a-plenty, and—say, hain't ye got another hankerchief in your pocket? [*He pulls out another and she wipes eyes on it.*]

PROF. SCHUYLER [*coming forward*]. I'll go down with you, Mrs. Green, and show you the Freshman classroom.

[*Turns to class.*] The Seniors may be excused. [*Turns to MELCHISEDEK.*] Come, Melchisedek.

[*Exeunt* PROF. SCHUYLER, MRS. GREEN *and* MELCHISEDEK, C.]

SENIORS *spring up in amusement, all excitedly trying to talk at once.*

HARVEY. Well, what do—you know about that?

ROGER. Great, eh?

JOSIE. Some class to that child!

EDITH. “Blessings on thee, little man!”

IRA. But what is its name?—Mel—Mel—Mel—

DAVE. No, no, little boy,—not “Mel, Mel, Mel,” at all, under any circumstances. It ’s—it ’s—

JOSIE. Some kind of a “deck”—“decks,”—“mex”—I don’t know! It would choke me to have to say it often!

LAWRENCE. You just sneeze in the middle, and then let go quick.

HARVEY. But, if we ’ve got to adopt the child, we ’ll have to know its name.

IRA. I don’t see why. We ought to have some rights in choosing a name for our own infant.

DAVE. Sure we had. We don’t know how the promising youngster may turn out. Call it “X”—that ’s something like Josie had it.

ROGER. The very thing! X—the Unknown Quantity!

HARVEY. Certainly plenty of quantity, too. I ’ll bet it weighs two hundred pounds.

IRA. And then some!

JOSIE. Well fed, you see!

EDITH. Such a picture of health and strength!

MILDRED. And innocence!

HARVEY. We have indeed a problem to solve. How will our protégé turn out? Find the value of X! Come, who ’s our mathematician?

DAVE. Edith, where art thou?

EDITH [*stepping to board*]. Here! Let me see—we are eight.
[*Writes “8”.*]

LAWRENCE. Why not “8Y’s?” Aren’t we a wise eight, or eight wise—?

EDITH. Not to solve this! 8’s better. Eight complete units—

DAVE. That’s us.

EDITH [*writing*]. $8 + Y = \text{what?}$

IRA. One jolly lark!

EDITH. Then let l stand for lark. [*writes “8 + X = 1l.”*]

ROGER. Make it a capital L, Edith, for we want our money’s worth. [*EDITH makes proper correction.*]

EDITH. Now for the second equation. [*Thinks a minute.*]
We are the Class of 19—

ALL. We are!

EDITH. Therefore [*writes*] $19 - X = 8 - 1L$. So here is the problem:

$$\begin{array}{r} 8 + X = 1L \\ 19 - X = 8 - 1L \\ \textit{Find the value of X.} \end{array}$$

LAWRENCE. Some problem that!

JOSIE. I see no end of sport for us. See its round, rosy cheeks, and its big blue eyes, so fresh and green and unsophisticated—

HARVEY. Who dares guess what its value to us may prove to be?

LAWRENCE. A whole term of unadulterated sport!

EDITH. How we will improve it,—in size, and shape, and color!

MILDRED. And covering! For heaven’s sake, and all our sakes, don’t forget the clothes.

IRA. It wears “duds,” Mildred.

HARVEY. What we will teach it!

ROGER. Even if teachers could n’t, out their way!

DAVE. It needs fixing all right,—that's no joke! But I rather think we're good for it. And we have a problem right to our hand,—X equals what?

JOSIE. I was afraid our Senior year was going to be miserably dull. But now, what fun it will be! Did you notice its gum?

IRA. And its high-water trousers?

MILDRED. And its red tie? Ugh!

ROGER. And its jewelry?

DAVE. I only hope Self and Haynes won't get to quarreling over it!

HARVEY. Oh, we should worry! It may as well be over that as over any other thing! They will fight, you know! They can't help it! It's born in them!

JOSIE. We'll adopt him—high-water trousers, gum, jewelry, hayseed, and all!

EDITH. He shall be our mascot!

MILDRED. Well, you may count me out! It may be what some of you call sport, but I consider myself above such uncultured behavior with such ignorant bores!

LAWRENCE. But X isn't a bore! X is a problem—the only real, live problem ever presented by a Freshman class!

HARVEY. Let's go hunt him up! "Prof." must be through with him by this time! [*Exeunt, L., laughing.*]

Enter MISS IRVING.

MISS IRVING. Now, about this English—Oh, nobody here? Well, I'll write it on the board. [*Turns to board, picks up chalk, sees equation.*] No, I'd better not disturb Professor Schuyler's work. It may be important. [*Reads, silently.*] But how peculiar!

Enter PROF. SCHUYLER *from Right.*

MISS IRVING. I was just noticing your strange problem, professor. I am not much of a mathematician, but this looks—

PROF. SCHUYLER. It's not mine. I don't understand—O well, I don't think it amounts to anything!

Enter MELCHISEDEK, Center. Looks all around, as if frightened, hands in pockets.

PROF. SCHUYLER. Some of the students have been experimenting, I suppose! [*Reads.*] "Find the value of X."—humph! Rather a difficult thing to do, in that case, I should imagine, the value of L not being given. One could only express X in terms of L. You may erase it if you wish to use the space. [*Discovers MELCHISEDEK.*] What is it, Melchisedek?

MELCHISEDEK [*jumps at hearing his name*]. Oh! Why, I—I—I guess I got in the wrong door! [*Backs out, eyes and mouth wide open, trembling, as curtain falls.*]

CURTAIN

ACT II

SCENE: *Senior Classroom. Desk at back, with dictionary on left of desk. Entrance back of desk, leading to hall. [Entrance Center.]*

After slight pause, LAWRENCE enters, Left, with MELCHISEDEK by arm.

LAWRENCE. You see, X—

MELCHISEDEK. But that ain't my name!

LAWRENCE. O yes, it is!

MELCHISEDEK. But—

LAWRENCE. We've named you that, you know!

MELCHISEDEK. Who has?

LAWRENCE. Why, we Seniors!

MELCHISEDEK [*looking all around room*]. Seniors? Which? Where?

LAWRENCE. You see, we've taken a big liking to you, X, and so we've adopted you, and we're going to make you have just the best time this year you ever dreamed of. We couldn't learn to pronounce that jaw-breaking name of yours in a billion years!

MELCHISEDEK. Sho, now, that's dead easy! You just say—

LAWRENCE. O no, we don't! Not we! We say "X," and we shall keep on saying "X" forever and forever. But you haven't been around the school yet. Some place, eh?

MELCHISEDEK. You bet! Everything's so different from what—

LAWRENCE. Of course! We knew it would be! That's why we are all going to explain everything to you, and make things easy for you.

MELCHISEDEK. It's mighty good of you all, you know! I'm blooming glad. And ma will be tickled to death to hear I've got so many good friends already.

LAWRENCE. Didn't she tell us to take good care of you?

MELCHISEDEK. Of course, but—

LAWRENCE. Then, of course, we—

Enter from Right DAVE, HARVEY, ROGER, IRA.

DAVE. Now, here's our mascot!

MELCHISEDEK. Mascot? [*Looks all around.*]

ROGER. You!

MELCHISEDEK [*amazed*]. Me!

HARVEY. Exactly! And now, listen! You're a stranger here [*MELCHISEDEK nods*]. You don't know anybody?

[*MELCHISEDEK shakes head.*] Nobody knows you but us!

[*MELCHISEDEK shakes head.*] Nobody must! Understand?

MELCHISEDEK [*uncertainly*]. I—guess—so!

DAVE. We want you for a "dark horse."

MELCHISEDEK. Horse? Me? Is a mascot a horse?

DAVE. No, no! But we want to keep you dark!

MELCHISEDEK. But I'm afraid of the dark!

IRA. You don't understand. We want you to be "under cover."

MELCHISEDEK. I like plenty of cover in the winter, but in summer-time I can't have too much on the bed or else—

IRA. You don't understand. We just want to keep you all to ourselves!

MELCHISEDEK. Oh!

IRA. And so, when anybody,—except us, of course!—speaks to you, you just keep mum, no matter what they say, and just answer, "I am only a little Freshman. My name is X. I belong to the Senior Class." Understand?

MELCHISEDEK [*hesitatingly*]. I—er—guess so! But I don't like to speak pieces.

DAVE. But this is such a short one. Try it! [*Prompts.*] "I am only a little Freshman."

MELCHISEDEK [*embarrassed*]. "I am—a—only—little Freshman."

DAVE. No!—"only a little"—"I am only a little Freshman."

MELCHISEDEK. "I am only a little Freshman."

DAVE [*prompting*]. "My name is X."

MELCHISEDEK [*eagerly*]. Oh, is it yours, too?

DAVE. No, no! Yours, not mine! I was just telling you what to say.

MELCHISEDEK. I see!

DAVE. Try it.

MELCHISEDEK. My name is X.

HARVEY. Good! Now, "I belong to the Senior Class."

MELCHISEDEK. I belong to the Senior Class!

ROGER. O come now, say it proudly as if you were It. You are, you know!

MELCHISEDEK [*straightening up*]. Of course I am! But how am I going to remember?

LAWRENCE [*taking note-book from pocket*]. I'll write it down for you, so you'll get it straight. [*Writes.*]

MELCHISEDEK [*repeating by rote, to commit it to memory*]. "I am only a little Freshman,"—"I am only a little Freshman,"—

LAWRENCE [*tearing leaf from book, and handing it to MELCHISEDEK*]. Here! Now, put it in your pocket. We want to talk to you a little before class.

IRA. Yes, we want to take you "into the bosom of the family," and reveal to you all the secrets of the class.

MELCHISEDEK. Secrets?

HARVEY. Sure! Class skeletons, and—

MELCHISEDEK [*frightened*]. Skeletons?

ROGER. Yes. Listen, X. To begin with, we've got a class pennant—

MELCHISEDEK. Pennant? What's that? [*Listens eagerly.*]

LAWRENCE. Banner! Sort of flag, you know—our class colors, and all that!

DAVE. But now, listen, X. The Juniors don't know it.

HARVEY. And they must n't!

ALL. Never, never, never!

MELCHISEDEK. Why? Did you steal it?

DAVE. No, but *they* would!—if they knew we had it, or where it was kept. We trust you, you see, because you belong to us, and you 're our mascot.

MELCHISEDEK. What 's a mascot?

DAVE. Why, any animal—

MELCHISEDEK. Animal?

LAWRENCE. Or thing!

MELCHISEDEK. Thing?

HARVEY. That brings good luck, you know. Sometimes it 's one thing, sometimes another. With us, *you 're* It!

MELCHISEDEK. Humph!

DAVE. And so we 're going to give you a glimpse of the pennant. See?

MELCHISEDEK [*looking all around for it*]. No, I don't see.

LAWRENCE. But you will! [*Going to desk, others following.*] We 've got it right—

ROGER. 'Sh!—'sh! Somebody 's coming! [*All stare at entrance.*]

Enter EDITH, JOSIE, and MILDRED, Left.

EDITH. Oh, here you are! We 've been looking all over for you, X.

MELCHISEDEK. For me?

JOSIE. Who else? Dig out, boys! You 're not in this at all.

DAVE. Just as you say! Come on, boys. [*Starts R.*]

LAWRENCE. Well, I must hurry out and do some laboratory work, then. That chemistry is some sticker! [*Removes coat and hangs up at L.*]

EDITH. Look out for the fate of little Willie:

“Little Willie took a drink,
He lives to drink no more;
For what he thought was H₂O
Was H₂SO₄”

LAWRENCE. I 'll swear off drinking forevermore. [*Exits L. Other boys exeunt R.*]

JOSIE. Now, X, we want to show you the libraries, and laboratories, and elevators, and locker-rooms, and auditorium, and—and—all the sights, you know! We don't want you to get lost around this building again where we won't be able to find you when we want to use you.

MELCHISEDEK. Now, ain't you kind?

EDITH. Kind? Why, no!

JOSIE. Not so 's you could notice!

EDITH. We've adopted you, you know! You belong to us!

MELCHISEDEK. To you, or her [*pointing to JOSIE*]?

JOSIE. To all of us—our class!

MELCHISEDEK. Oh! "I am only a little Freshman. My name is X. I belong to the Senior Class."

EDITH. Good! You have it learned already.

JOSIE. We can't all be out of class at once, of course! We girls are graduating from the Domestic Science Course; all but Edith, who takes the Literary Course; Lawrence, the boy who took off his coat, is also graduating from the Literary Course. Harvey and Dave graduate from the Scientific Course, Roger from the English Course, and Ira from the Latin Course.

MELCHISEDEK. Mercy on me! What course will I graduate in?

JOSIE. In the course of time, we hope! But come! We haven't much time before the bell rings. We want to show you our new—[*Starts to open desk.*]—

Enter LENORE, Right, with MILDRED. MILDRED joins girls.

EDITH. Pshaw! There's that meddlesome Lenore! She'll surely catch on!

LENORE [*crosses to MELCHISEDEK*]. Who are you?

MELCHISEDEK. "I am only a little Freshman."

LENORE. Not so little as I've seen. What's your name?

MELCHISEDEK. "My name is X."

LENORE. X? What in the world did you get a name like that tacked on to you for? Where do you belong?

MELCHISEDEK. "I belong to the Senior Class."

LENORE. Why, how can you be a Freshman and belong to the Senior Class?

MELCHISEDEK. Dunno! That's what they said.

LENORE. Who said?

MELCHISEDEK [*points to girls*]. Them!

LENORE. Edith and Josie?

MELCHISEDEK. Yes, and—the fellows, too!

LENORE. The question in my mind is, are you a Freshman, or are you a Senior or what?

MELCHISEDEK. What, I guess! [LENORE *walks L.* JOSIE *walks down.*]

JOSIE. We had so much to tell you, X. We wanted to show you our new—

EDITH [*nervously walking to her to prevent disclosure*]. Don't forget the class in geometry, Josie! Have you worked out all your problems?

JOSIE. Geometry? Don't mention it! I've forgotten the very definition of the word. Got your book? [Joins EDITH. EDITH *gives her book, and whispers to her warningly. They look covertly at LENORE.*]

LENORE [*to MELCHISEDEK*]. Don't let those Seniors make a fool of you, young man! They're chock full of tricks—

MELCHISEDEK [*with dignity*]. "I belong to the Senior Class."

JOSIE. You bet you do, X, and we've got the swellest new— [Sits at desk.]

MILDRED [*calls, with cough of warning*]. Josie!

JOSIE. Gymnasium, we're going to let you use with us! [At desk, with book.]

MILDRED [*relieved*]. Oh!

JOSIE. You see, X, we're the whole cheese this year, and we've just bought—

MILDRED }
EDITH } [*coughing, warningly*]. Ahem!

JOSIE. The most beautiful statue of Venus for the Auditorium. You must see it this very morning! [MILDRED and EDITH give long sigh of relief.] And on Class Day, we 're going to hang our lovely new—

MILDRED [*uneasily*]. Josie, did you get the twenty-third?

JOSIE [*consulting book*]. Not me! Nor the twentieth, nor the twenty-first, nor the twenty-second, nor the twenty-fourth, nor the twenty-fifth!

EDITH. Why, that 's all we had!

LENORE [*to MELCHISEDEK*]. Josie 's dying to tell you something, kid, but the girls don't want me to hear! A Senior secret, of course! I 'm not a fool, if I am only a Junior. I can climb on the table when I smell a mouse! I 'll dig out and give 'em a chance! Bye-bye, little boy! [*Waves hand airily.*] Take good care of your cunning little pet, girls! [*Exits R.*]

JOSIE. Has she really gone? [EDITH and MILDRED go to entrance and look out.] We are just crazy to tell you about our pennant, X. You really must see it. The Juniors don't know we have it!

MILDRED. And they must n't!

GIRLS [*all*]. Never, never, never!

MELCHISEDEK. Why?

EDITH. They 'd steal it!

MELCHISEDEK. Why?

JOSIE. Oh, it 's a part of the High School game!

MELCHISEDEK. Stealing is? Do they *teach* it?

MILDRED. Oh, no, no! But they like to get the best of us by taking our pennant away. It represents our honors and dignity, and standing, and all that sort of thing, and if they can get it, why—

JOSIE. They 've got our goat!

MILDRED. Josie!

JOSIE. Well, it 's true!

MELCHISEDEK. Where is it?

JOSIE. We've got it right here in the desk.

MELCHISEDEK [*amazed*]. A goat—in that desk?

JOSIE. No, no! The pennant! See?—in this bottom drawer! [*Speaks very mysteriously, girls guarding entrances.*] And we keep the key down here in the little hollow under the dictionary stand. [*Shows him.*] See? [*Takes it out.*] Nobody in all the school would think of looking there! [*Takes key out and unlocks drawer.*]

EDITH [*while JOSIE is busy*]. We tried letting one of the class keep the key, but somebody else was always sure to want it when the one who had it was miles away. Now we're going to make you Guardian of the Key!

MELCHISEDEK. How?

MILDRED. Why, you must just look under the stand whenever you come in, and see if it's safe. That's all! And if you ever find it gone—

MELCHISEDEK [*scratching head*]. But how *could* I find it, if it was *gone*?

MILDRED. I mean, if you ever see that it is gone, report to one of us at once.

MELCHISEDEK. But which one? [*Looks from one to the other.*]

MILDRED. Oh, it doesn't matter. Whichever you find first!

MELCHISEDEK. I see. "I am only a little Freshman."

JOSIE [*taking pennant from desk and holding it up*]. Here it is!

MELCHISEDEK [*whistles*]. Whew!

LENORE [*looks in at C. entrance*]. Aha! I see! I knew something was up, if I'd just give 'em time to bring it down! [*Watches while JOSIE folds it carefully and replaces it, and is watching eagerly to see where key is placed when EDITH walks toward C., and she disappears. EDITH stands in entrance C. while JOSIE replaces key, MELCHISEDEK watching closely.*]

JOSIE. Now, X, you are in full possession of our choicest secret. Remember how we trust you. When we, in order to solve our problem, transposed X,—

MELCHISEDEK. Transposed me?

JOSIE. Yes,—we transposed X from the Freshman side of the equation to the Senior side.

MELCHISEDEK. I don't—

Enter IRA, Left.

IRA. Now, girls, it isn't fair for you to monopolize X like this. I've been hanging around for an hour, waiting for a chance to show him the campus and gymnasium.

MILDRED. But we want to take him—

IRA. You had your turn, I tell you. I'm next! We boys drew straws—

JOSIE. But you'd rather go with us, had n't you, X?

MELCHISEDEK [*looking from one to the other, embarrassed*].
Why—er—I—I—

IRA. You'd rather have a man put you next to things, had n't you, X?

MELCHISEDEK. Oh, but I—I—I don't—

JOSIE. You think you're smart, Ira Self, but—

IRA. And you think because you're a girl that you—

JOSIE. I'll have you understand, I'm Josie Stockbridge!

IRA. And I'll have you understand that I'm—

Enter ROGER from Right. Steps down between them.

ROGER. What's this? Self in a fuss, and me not invited? I won't stand for that! [*Turns to MELCHISEDEK.*] Just in time to rescue you, eh, X? I've been wondering where you were. Want to show you—

IRA. Now look here, Roger Haynes, this isn't your butt-in! I came to take X for a look around the campus! You have no right—

ROGER. No right? Well, I like that! I'll show you—

IRA. I'm from Missouri!

ROGER [*pulls off coat*]. If you— [*throws coat on floor behind him.*]

IRA [*same business with coat*]. I'm ready! I—

Enter DAVE, Right. Steps between them.

DAVE. Again? [*Boys hang heads.*] What's wrong this time, boys? [*Looks first at ROGER.*]

ROGER. N-nothing! [*DAVE turns to IRA.*]

IRA. N-nothing!

DAVE [*turns to girls*]. Strange how boys will act just like game roosters shut up together in a pen, for n-n-nothing!

JOSIE. Well, that Ira Self thinks he owns this class!

EDITH. And the world with it, for good measure, with a nice little red fence around it!

JOSIE. And Roger Haynes thinks he's just the whole cheese!—while he's really one of the smallest skippers in it!

MILDRED. Yes, he really isn't big enough to take up all the room on the point of a No. 10 needle.

EDITH. He's just about the tenth part of the size of a grain of mustard seed!

JOSIE. An ordinary mortal couldn't see either of them at all without the most powerful microscope!

DAVE. Now you've got your measure, boys. Ears burn?

IRA. Just what I always said about Haynes!

ROGER. Not half as strong as I've always known about Self!

IRA. Haynes! [*Threateningly.*]

ROGER. Self! [*Threateningly.*]

DAVE [*soothingly*]. There, there, boys! Put on your coats and be decent!

[Boys pick up coats sheepishly.]

MILDRED. What obedient little boys!

EDITH. And how well you have them trained, Dave!

JOSIE. That 's Senior gymnastics, X. You see what you 're in for four years from now!

Enter HARVEY, Left, LAWRENCE, Right.

HARVEY. I 'm looking for X.

LAWRENCE. So am I!

HARVEY. I want to show him the school!

LAWRENCE. So do I.

HARVEY. Well, we can't all show it to him at the same time, unless we form a body guard and escort him with all the pomposity and grandeur of the most distinguished visitor.

JOSIE [*taking X by arm*]. [*He dodges and looks frightened.*]
Ladies first, if you please!

DAVE. All right. Oh, boys? [*Boys nod.*] Take him along, girls. Be careful of him, and don't break, bruise, or soil him!

JOSIE. Thanks, awfully! We 'll be responsible for the wear and tear! Come, X!

[Boys step back courteously, as girls lead X out L.]

HARVEY. Got it solved, boys?

ROGER. Not yet! I 'm not sure it 's going to amount to anything! I 'm wondering if it 's worth the effort!

IRA. Did n't think you 'd stick to it very long, Haynes!

ROGER. Now, see here, Self, I—

IRA. And look this way, Haynes, I—

HARVEY. War 's declared off, boys. Run up a flag of truce!
[*Steps between them.*] Well, I 'm off to my Latin! Let the girls wrestle with the algebra! If you fellows can come along, and keep your hands off each other—

[Exeunt all, but DAVE, R.]

DAVE. Well, I must work, if the value of X is never satisfactorily demonstrated. These geometry problems are stickers! No idle hours for me. [*Sits desk, works silently for some time.*]

Enter PROF. SCHUYLER, *Right.*

PROF. SCHUYLER. I'm looking for— Oh, there you are, Farrington! Have you time now to go over those electrical experiments?

DAVE. As well now as any time, Professor, so long as they must be done! I've just finished my problems—and— [*Gathers up books, etc. In haste, drops problems under LAWRENCE'S coat.*]

PROF. SCHUYLER. I have a free hour, and—

DAVE. It's jolly kind of you. [*Exeunt* PROF. SCHUYLER and DAVE, *L.*]

Enter MDLLE. FLEURETTE and MELCHISEDEK, *Center.*

MDLLE. FLEURETTE. But your name,—it is,—what?

MELCHISEDEK. "I am only a little Freshman. My name is X."

MDLLE. FLEURETTE. And you are belonging—

MELCHISEDEK. "I belong to the Senior Class." Ma wants me to study French, but I can't—somehow—see—

MDLLE. FLEURETTE [*puzzled*]. Oui?

MELCHISEDEK. You mean, you and me? [*Points to each.*]

MDLLE. FLEURETTE. *Non, non!* I mean— [*nods "yes" very emphatically.*]

MELCHISEDEK [*puzzled*]. Spell it.

MDLLE. FLEURETTE [*very slowly*]. O-u-i.

MELCHISEDEK. Oh! [*Points to her, and then to himself.*]
You—and I! Well, that's just what I said!

MDLLE. FLEURETTE. *Non, non!* I mean,—how you speak,— [*nods head emphatically.*]

MELCHISEDEK. How d'ye do?

MDLLE. FLEURETTE [*nods again*]. *Non, non!* To say, it is true!

MELCHISEDEK. Oh! You mean, yes!

MDLLE. FLEURETTE. Oui!—er—yes, yes—that's what I mean! It's so—not hard—for you to say! For me—

this English—[*looks at watch*—it is, of the watch, ten. I must off to the class of me, to teach the boys to the French. *Comprenez vous?* [*Bows herself out C. X watches her curiously.*]

MELCHISEDEK. I don't want to learn no French stuff, if it makes me chatter and bob like a monkey! [*Examines books on desk.*] My! what a nice new book this is! I like to read books with pretty covers. Al-ge-bray! Pretty name, too, if a fellow ever found out anything about what it means! [*Reads.*] "Ax-i-om." Now, what in the world is that? Something to cut with, of course! [*Sits.*] "Two things equal to the same thing must be equal to each other." [*Thinks.*] Then if a cat is an animal, and a dog is an animal, the cat must equal the dog. But it don't—in a fight! No, by jingo, it don't!

Enter LENORE, Left.

LENORE. Here's my chance to pick the spring chicken! [*Walks toward MELCHISEDEK.*] Wonder where the Seniors are! Thought they always did their studying in this room. I wanted to ask them—Oh, just lots of questions! Say, kid, tell me the honest truth now—aren't you a Senior?

MELCHISEDEK. Me? I—I—I don't think so. "I belong to the Senior Class."

LENORE. Then you must be a Senior.

MELCHISEDEK. What is a Senior, anyway?

LENORE. Oh, it's a swell-headed, strutting, own-the-school boy or girl, who has been here four years and studied so hard that it's turned the brain.

MELCHISEDEK. No, I haint none!

LENORE. Guess not, by your grammar! But what are you?

MELCHISEDEK. Why, I'm a—a—what did they say? A mascot!

LENORE. Why, there is n't any such class!

MELCHISEDEK. Oh, yes there is. I'm it! I belong to a lot o' nice kids! Dandy lookers, and no end good to a fellow!

LENORE. But what 's your classroom? Don't you know?

MELCHISEDEK. I don't know much. "I am only a little Freshman."

LENORE. Freshman? Humph! What 's your name?

MELCHISEDEK. "My name is X."

LENORE. O come now, kid. Quit your joshing! What 's your real one?

MELCHISEDEK. Melchisedek Green!

LENORE [*sarcastically*]. Is that all?

MELCHISEDEK. I told you there was an "X" to it somewhere since I come to this here school; but I don't know where they stick it in, yet.

LENORE. Where you from?

MELCHISEDEK. Home!

LENORE. Where 's "home?"

MELCHISEDEK. The farm!

LENORE. What farm?

MELCHISEDEK. Pa's!

LENORE. Humph! Who 's Pa?

MELCHISEDEK. Hezekiah Green.

LENORE. Gemima!

MELCHISEDEK. No,—Hezekiah!

LENORE. [*Hunts around desk. He eyes her suspiciously.*]

Did the Seniors tell you where they keep their key?

MELCHISEDEK. What key?

LENORE. The desk key, of course, where they keep that pen-nant! They need n't think we Juniors are all asleep.

MELCHISEDEK. You can't find it. They keep it well hid.

LENORE. You mean they *think* they do.

MELCHISEDEK. [*Rises, uneasily walking around.*] O no, they do! Why, they showed me—

LENORE [*eagerly*]. You? What? When? [*Grabs him by arm to make him tell.*]

MELCHISEDEK [*catching himself*]. Why,—er—everything! All over the school! There's snags of places to hide keys! Why, they showed me a gymnasium that—

LENORE. And the pennant, of course!

MELCHISEDEK [*uneasily*]. What pennant?

LENORE. Innocence!

MELCHISEDEK. What innocence? They didn't show me no innocence! [*LENORE walks to L.*] Did she find it? [*Is startled, and goes to desk to look under stand for key. LENORE looks back over shoulder and sees him. He sees her looking, and comes down, hands in pockets. She goes up to desk. He follows. She comes down. He follows. Continue this, ad lib., bringing out the determination on her part to get the key, and an equal determination on his to foil her. She finally pauses beside LAWRENCE'S coat, and picks up DAVE'S paper.*] What's this? Geometry! Neat work that! Must have dropped out of this coat. [*Puts it in pocket of coat. Then turns to MELCHISEDEK.*] You're a nice little boy, all right, if you wasn't so green.

MELCHISEDEK. Why, I ain't green.

LENORE. Oh, ain't you?

MELCHISEDEK. No, sir, I ain't! We're white folks, same as you. Green is just my name—the end one! Melchisedek's my front name.

LENORE. I see! And X equals what?

MELCHISEDEK. Dunno yet! [*Reads from book.*] “Two things equal to the same thing must be equal to each other.” Then if a boy's a Senior, and a girl's a Senior, a boy must be equal to a girl—

LENORE. Not on your life, kid. Guess some more!

Enter EDITH, LAWRENCE, ROGER, IRA, HARVEY, Left.

EDITH. O here you are again, X. We thought we'd lost you!

LAWRENCE. Been weeping briny tears, as we called through the halls:

ALL [*in concert*]. Boy lost! Boy lost!
 Hair red, and eyes crossed!
 Singular number—Male sex—
 Answers to the name of “X.”
 Pigeon-toed—fresh and green—
 Return to Class 19—.

LENORE. Dear me! but you are the wise bunch!

HARVEY. Certainly, Lenore!

LAWRENCE. Wise is right. Prove it by logic. Listen!

Major Premise: All Seniors are wise!

Minor Premise: We eight are Seniors!

Conclusion: Therefore: We eight are wise! [*Goes and puts on coat.*]

LENORE. 'Tis n't safe to argue from false premises. [*Follows LAWRENCE*] Was that your coat?

LAWRENCE. Bought and paid for.

LENORE. I put—

ROGER [*shaking MELCHISEDEK by hand*]. And here you were safe and sound all the time!

[*LAWRENCE and LENORE join the group. She watches for a chance to tell LAWRENCE about paper. Opens mouth and tries to speak after each speech, but somebody cuts in. This must be made very pronounced.*]

HARVEY. Had n't we ought to pay him the reward? [*MELCHISEDEK steps forward eagerly.*]

IRA. Nix on it! Make him pay us! Think of the wear and tear on our feelings. [*MELCHISEDEK steps back with long sigh of disappointment.*]

LENORE [*nudges LAWRENCE*]. Say, I put a paper--

LAWRENCE [*not noticing her*]. Shall we sue him for damages? [*MELCHISEDEK holds up hands in fright and horror.*]

LENORE [*nudges LAWRENCE*]. Listen! I picked up—

Enter JOSIE, Left, with open letter.

JOSIE. Oh, see here! The richest thing! A letter to our class!

LENORE. Humph! No use! I'll sneak. [*Exit L.*]

JOSIE. Listen! [*Reads*] "Dear young men and women: You are the big boys and girls of this school, and I know you will take good care of my dear little Melchisedek."

MELCHISEDEK [*stepping forward, grinning with delight*].
Ma!

JOSIE. Don't interrupt, X. That's rude. [*Reads*] "He hain't never be'n away from his ma before in all his life, and I'm powerfully feared he may get sick or hurt, or something at that big school. Can't you fasten him with a long cow-rope, or something, so he won't get lost runnin' round the yard? I used to do that ways when he was littler, so he could n't get outside the door-yard. Be sure he always puts on his rubbers and takes along his umberell when it looks like rain; and when it gits cold, make him wrap up his neck good and warm. And don't let him learn to smoke them cigarettes. They say it's mighty bad for the brain. You girls must all be step-mothers to the poor boy. I never had but one in all the world. I put my little darling in your care. Yours, respectively, SAMANTHA GREEN."

MELCHISEDEK. I just knew it was ma! [*Has listened with mouth and eyes wide open, showing the greatest delight.*]

HARVEY. Well, we're doing our best with the Infant. Ain't we, X?

MELCHISEDEK. I—I—I guess so. You're all just awfully good for me—I mean, *to me!*

EDITH. That's because we like you!

ROGER. Well, where are we all going to?

MILDRED. Dear me, Roger! Haven't you been told time and time and time and again that a preposition is a very poor word to end sentences with?

ROGER. Yes. Haven't you?

EDITH. I've got something more to show you, X.

MELCHISEDEK. Oh, have you? Now, ain't that kind? [*Exit EDITH, L., MELCHISEDEK following.*]

Enter DAVE, hurriedly, searching pockets.

DAVE. I don't suppose any of you have seen a stray paper of mine anywhere around? I don't remember putting it in my pocket, but it is n't in any of my books, and—

HARVEY. What was it, Dave?

DAVE. My geometry problems.

ALL. What?

IRA. Not the last ten?

DAVE. Exactly.

ROGER. Whew! How'd you get them?

DAVE. Dug!

JOSIE. Must have gone pretty deep!

HARVEY. And now they're gone!

JOSIE. But you'll find 'em.

DAVE. Where?

IRA. Or you'll do 'em over.

DAVE. How?

HARVEY. Dig!

DAVE. When?

MILDRED. That's so! We're supposed to hand them in—

HARVEY. To-day! That's so.

LAWRENCE. Now, is n't that tough luck? By George, Dave, I'm sorry! [*Lays hand on DAVE's shoulder.*]

IRA. Time for class, everybody! [*Exeunt all but DAVE, in confusion.*]

DAVE. If I only—[*searches desk.*]

Enter LENORE, Center.

LENORE. Lost something? [*DAVE nods.*] What?

DAVE. A geometry paper—problems—that's all!

LENORE. Geometry? [*Aside*] I thought it was the key! Here 's my chance! [*Aloud*] Let me help you! [*Both search. LENORE manages to get key, and pockets it. Suddenly remembers paper she found, and stands up, excitedly.*] Say, did you say it was problems? I 'll bet I know who 's got it!

DAVE. Nobody 's got it. It 's just lost!

LENORE. Somebody *has* got it! It 's stolen.

DAVE [*stopping suddenly and facing her*]. What?

LENORE. That boy—let me see, what 's his name? He hung his coat—[*points to place where coat hung.*]

DAVE. Not Lawrence Leonard!

LENORE. Yes, that 's the boy. He 's got it. He dropped it out of his pocket. I saw it.

DAVE. But how—? Oh, it can't be!

LENORE. Maybe it can't! But it *is*.

DAVE. But see here! I 'd rather lose a dozen papers than think that of Lawrence. Why, he 's—

LENORE. The one that 's got it!

DAVE. He would n't—

LENORE. He *has*! Ask him.

DAVE. Never!

LENORE. Well, that 's up to you! [*Exits C.*]

DAVE [*walking to front*]. No, indeed, never!

Enter PROF. SCHUYLER, *Left.*

PROF. SCHUYLER. What 's the matter, Dave?

DAVE [*embarrassed*]. Nothing! [*Turns and searches floor in confusion.*]

PROF. SCHUYLER [*staring at him*]. What?

DAVE. I mean—everything!

PROF. SCHUYLER. Had n't you better tell me—

DAVE [*straightening up*]. I 've lost my geometry problems—the last ten.

PROF. SCHUYLER. Well, now, that 's bad. Where did you lose them?

DAVE. Why, here, I guess! You remember I finished working them just before we went to the laboratory. I must have dropped them out of my tablet—

PROF. SCHUYLER. They 'll probably turn up!

DAVE [*dubiously*]. I hope so!

PROF. SCHUYLER. You don't think—

DAVE [*quickly*]. What?

PROF. SCHUYLER. Anybody has—

DAVE [*emphatically*]. No! [*Exits R.*]

PROF. SCHUYLER. The boy acts peculiar. I wonder if he does n't suspect—

Enter LENORE, Center.

LENORE. Professor Schuyler, I think I know who has Dave Farrington's geometry problems.

PROF. SCHUYLER [*whirling to face her*]. What? Who?

LENORE. Lawrence Leonard.

PROF. SCHUYLER. It can't be!

LENORE. But I saw— [*hesitates.*]

PROF. SCHUYLER. What?

LENORE. Saw where they had dropped out of his pocket!

PROF. SCHUYLER [*amazed*]. What? Are you—

LENORE. Sure!

PROF. SCHUYLER. Ask Lawrence to come to me—at once! [*Exit LENORE, C.*] I must investigate this. I can not, will not, believe it! But, still, if she really saw—

Enter LAWRENCE, Right.

LAWRENCE. Did you want to see me, professor?

PROF. SCHUYLER. Yes, Lawrence, listen! I'll come right to the point. Dave Farrington has lost his geometry paper—the last ten problems—

LAWRENCE. Yes, he was telling us about it. Isn't it tough, right here the last—

PROF. SCHUYLER. Yes, yes, but wait! A certain student has told me positively that you have those problems—

LAWRENCE [*astounded*]. I? Why, I could n't work—

PROF. SCHUYLER. Dave's paper!

LAWRENCE. What? Who dares—

PROF. SCHUYLER. In your pocket!

LAWRENCE. Why, who in the world could say such a thing of me? I never even saw it. [*Begins to unload pockets, piling up trash of every sort on desk. At last, takes out paper, and opens it.*] What's this? Geometry, as I live! Dave's writing, too! [*Hands it to PROF. SCHUYLER with dazed air.*]

PROF. SCHUYLER. Thank you, Lawrence. But this grieves me—

LAWRENCE. Professor Schuyler, I swear that I never saw that paper till this very minute!

PROF. SCHUYLER. I wish I could believe you, Lawrence, but the evidence—

Enter MELCHISEDEK, Left, listens with interest.

LAWRENCE. Hang the evidence!

PROF. SCHUYLER. Lawrence!

LAWRENCE. But I don't care a flip for the evidence. Have n't you always taught us that a straight line is the shortest distance between two points? I am an honest boy, Professor Schuyler, from an honest family,—and I'm taking that straight line. If I pass, I'll pass fair.

PROF. SCHUYLER. I must say I like the ring of that, Lawrence. Let us go and find Dave. This matter must be sifted to the bottom. [*Exit PROF. SCHUYLER and LAWRENCE, C.*]

MELCHISEDEK. Pretty big talk! Loud words! Wonder what's up? Well, it ain't getting my lessons, anyway! "A straight line is the shortest distance between two points." Wonder what he meant by that! "A straight line." "Two points." [*Goes to board.*] One point, Freshman Class. [*Makes big dot.*] Second point, Grad-

uating. [*Makes another big dot, with much flourish of crayon.*] Straight line from here to there. [*Draws straight line between dots, then stands back and surveys result.*] Can I make it? I'll sure try!

Enter JOSIE, on run, Left.

JOSIE. Oh, X! X! Have you heard—

MELCHISEDEK [*turns to face her*]. What?

JOSIE. We're all in the worst mix-up! Lawrence took Dave's problems. He says he didn't, and Dave says he didn't, but he had them in his pocket, and he won't say how they got there,—and the professor saw him with them, and—O dear! dear! Dave's all broke up. Lawrence is all broke up! Professor's all broke up! and we're all—all broke up!

MELCHISEDEK [*turning pockets inside out*]. I'm broke, too!

JOSIE [*going up to desk*]. I'm going to get out the pennant and take— [*kneels to get key*] Oh, X,—the key!

MELCHISEDEK [*hurrying up to her*]. What?

JOSIE [*rising and pointing to place sternly*]. Gone!

MELCHISEDEK [*kneeling over to see for himself*]. What?

JOSIE [*accusingly*]. Oh, X! When we trusted you!

Enter EDITH and MILDRED, Right, HARVEY, ROGER, IRA, and DAVE, Left.

JOSIE [*walking to center of stage*]. Boys! girls! The key is— ALL [*in great excitement*]. What?

JOSIE. Gone!

EDITH. Gone? What can we do?

MILDRED. We'll just have to—

ALL. Eliminate X!

MELCHISEDEK *drops head, and walks to center of stage slowly and sadly, while Class points fingers at him, all looking very scornful, as curtain falls.*

CURTAIN

ACT III

SCENE: *Same as Act II*

MILDRED and EDITH in chairs, near center stage, JOSIE behind looking over their shoulders. They have fashion plates, and are very interested in studying the styles.

JOSIE. Oh, there 's a peach!

MILDRED. Isn't this a darling?

JOSIE. Turn over, Edith. There 's a swell thing on the next page of yours. There! isn't that great?

EDITH. Oh, it 's rather pretty, but see here! How do you like this?

JOSIE. O mercy, Edith! Not for you!

EDITH. Now why not? Made of chiffon, with plenty of real lace to edge the flounces, and—maybe a sash of—

MILDRED. But you 're so short and dumpy, Edith. It takes a tall, slender girl to carry that sort of thing.

JOSIE [*mischievously*]. Now, Mildred would look too perfectly lovely for anything in it!

MILDRED [*complacently*], I think so, myself! [*Takes mirror from pocket and surveys reflection with satisfaction. Brushes speck of powder from nose, arranges hair, etc.*]

EDITH. Well, there 's nothing like having a good big opinion of one's own charms.

Enter MDLLE. FLEURETTE, Right.

MDLLE. FLEURETTE. Making the to-be-graduated frocks so soon? Am I *de trop*?

MILDRED [*jumping up and offering her chair. EDITH also rises*]. Oh, no, indeed, mademoiselle. On the contrary, you can help us very much.

MDLLE. FLEURETTE [*sits*]. What is the material going for to become?

JOSIE. Whatever is the swellest thing, of course!

MDLLE. FLEURETTE [*puzzled*]. Swell-est? You mean, swelled out beeg—so? [*Pantomimes as for hoop-skirts.*]

EDITH [*sitting beside her, MILDRED and JOSIE behind*]. No, no! “Swell” means stylish—*a la mode, chic*, you know!

MDLLE. FLEURETTE. Oh!—I see! I must make the note! [*Writes in note-book.*] This English is all the time such a funniness!

JOSIE. What would you advise, mademoiselle?

MDLLE. FLEURETTE. In Paree, the *crepe de chine*, made—so full—with ruffly skirts, and lacy, you know—here—with tiny slippers, big buckles, maybe diamond settings—are the good thing for the *débutante*. You pay—oh, too much moneys—to the frock!

EDITH [*ruefully*]. We pay too much here, too, when we have it! We ’re broke all the time!

MDLLE. FLEURETTE. Broke? You mean, you lace yourselves? [*Pantomimes around waist.*]

JOSIE. No, no! She means “without money.”

MDLLE. FLEURETTE. “Broke”—“without money,”—now, that is strange! I must write it. [*Writes note-book.*] “Broke—without money.” [*Pause.*] The horse is broke, when it goes fast. The glass is broke when it is cracked. The man is broke when he is without money!

EDITH. It is the same principle, you see, mademoiselle. When we get cracked, we go fast, and then, we are very soon without money.

MDLLE. FLEURETTE [*eagerly*]. Oh,—oui, oui! Now, I see! It is all—after all—so simple—*n’est-ce-pas?*

JOSIE. All simple, when you see through it!

MDLLE. FLEURETTE [*thoughtfully*]. The professor—he says, his back, it is almost broke, too. It is not fast; it is not without money; it must be cracked. *N’est-ce-pas?* He is suffering—oh, too much—with the—how you pro-

nounce the—[*looks note-book, turns pages, finds word, reads:*]. *b-a-c—k-a-c—h-e?*—is it *bacca-she*, or *bacca-shay*? [In spelling this, emphasize the “b” and “k” very strongly, dividing the word into syllables after each “c” so as to completely mystify the listener.]

MILDRED. Why, I suppose it must be *bacca-shay*. I never heard the word before.

EDITH. Nor I! May I see it? [MADemoisELLE shows note-book.] Why, that’s just plain, everyday *backache*!

MILDRED }
JOSIE } [together]. The idea!

JOSIE. O *mademoiselle*! Won’t you teach us to dance?

EDITH. We want to dance as you do in France!

Enter MELCHISEDEK from Center, watches and listens.

MDLLE. FLEURETTE [*rising and pantomiming*]. You point your toe; [*Girls all imitate, holding skirts at sides as she does, etc.* MELCHISEDEK *pantomimes behind*] you count one, two, three; you hesitate; and step—one, two, three—bow, and back up—one, two, three [*backs into desk*]. Oh! It is—what?

EDITH. O *mademoiselle*, did you hurt you?

JOSIE. This is too small a room to back up in.

MILDRED. Do let’s go to the auditorium and learn just how to do it! [*Grabs MDLLE. FLEURETTE around waist, and hurries her out R., EDITH and JOSIE following.*]

MELCHISEDEK [*advancing into center of stage*]. You point your toe,—so,—you count one, two, three; you hesitate; then step one, two, three; then bow, and back, one, two, three,— [*Holds trousers at sides, and pantomimes, ludicrously, finally backing out at C.*]

Enter LENORE, Right.

LENORE. Now, if I can just— [*Walks to desk, tries key in top drawer.*]

Enter MELCHISEDEK, Center.

MELCHISEDEK. Looking for something?

LENORE [*jumping up*]. No!

MELCHISEDEK, 'Scuse me! I jest thought you acted like you was.

[Continues to eye her, while pretending to practice dance steps, till she exits L. Draw this scene out according to skill and will of the producer. LENORE should not leave until Class is heard singing out R. Then she flounces indignantly to L. entrance, and turns to face MELCHISEDEK angrily, shaking fist at him.]

LENORE. I'll get even with you yet, you nose-y greenhorn!

MELCHISEDEK. I hope you will! It's what I'm planning on—getting even!

[Exit LENORE, L. Class—except DAVE and LAWRENCE—enter at R., singing Class Song. MELCHISEDEK waits till all are on stage, then follows LENORE.]

CLASS SONG

[AIR: "Tenting on the Old Camp-Ground"]

We've been sitting to-night on the old school-ground,
Talking of days gone by,

Of the dear, dear old class, that so soon must pass,
And forever say good-bye!

Hopeful are the hearts of the Seniors to-night,
Hopeful for what life may bring;

Hopeful are we all that our lives be bright,
So we bravely laugh and sing:

Hopeful to-night, hopeful to-night,

Sitting on the old school-ground!

We've been dreaming to-night on the old school-ground,
Dreaming of days to be,

Of the bright, bright ideal we would all make real,
And the joys we hope to see;

Happy are the hearts of the Seniors to-night,
 Happy over tasks well done;
 Happy are our hearts and our spirits bright,
 For a prize that 's nearly won!
 Happy to-night, happy to-night,
 Happy on the old school-ground!

We 've been wandering to-night o'er the old school-ground,
 Tears filling every eye,
 For we knew 't was the last and 't would soon be past,
 When our lips had breathed "Good-bye!"
 Heavy are the hearts of the Seniors to-night,
 Soon with the big world to blend;
 Heavy are the hearts, once so gladsome and light,
 O'er joys so soon to end!
 Parting to-night, parting to-night,
 Parting on the old school-ground!

MILDRED. Somebody was out of tune!

ALL [*stepping forward and pointing to self*]. Me?

MILDRED. O how do I know who is who, and which is which
 and whatever? I only spoke collectively!

HARVEY. Treats us like a bunch of cattle, boys. Shall we
 stand for it?

MILDRED. You can sit down, if you prefer.

HARVEY. Humph! [*All find seats.*]

ROGER. I thought we did a ripping job at reeling it off!

MILDRED. Well, it seems to me you might uphold the dignity
 of the class by expressing your sentiments in a more ele-
 gant and refined manner. The coarseness of this class—
 especially the male portion of it—is certainly appalling!

IRA [*taking out pocket dictionary*]. "Appalling"—what 's
 that? How do you spell it, Mildred?

ROGER. Oh, Mildred 's got a grouch!

MILDRED. Some more of your Senior culture! And now this
 scandal—

JOSIE. Yes, isn't it dreadful? And Dave won't come to class because he's too miserable, and Lawrence won't come because he's too—

IRA. Guilty!

ALL. No!

JOSIE. Not guilty, of course! But he thinks we think he thinks—O, I don't know what he thinks, or we think, or anybody else thinks—our key is gone, too—and X proved a traitor—

ROGER. Well, it served us right! We should have known better!

HARVEY. Anyway, we found his true value in short order!

EDITH. I only hope the pennant's safe yet! If we guard the desk—

ALL. We must!

MILDRED. But with Dave and Lawrence in this muddle!

EDITH. "O what a tangled web we weave
When first we know not what to believe!"

JOSIE. It's so hard to think X deliberately gave us away!

EDITH. But did he?

HARVEY. Why, of course! You girls *would* take him into your confidence. What else could you expect of one so raw and—

MILDRED. I always knew we'd be sorry for taking him up and making such a fool of him.

EDITH. But maybe he didn't—

ROGER. Nonsense! How else could the key—

Enter MRS. GREEN, Left. Carries huge old-fashioned satchel.

MRS. GREEN. Where's the boss of this school?

MILDRED [*rising*]. You mean—

MRS. GREEN. I mean, the head teacher—the perfesser.

JOSIE [*going to her and shaking hands*]. Why, it's Mrs. Green.

MRS. GREEN. Now you've struck it, miss. I want to find my Melchisedek! [*Drops satchel.*]

Enter MELCHISEDEK, Left.

MELCHISEDEK. Hello, ma!

MRS. GREEN. There 's my boy now. Bless his little feet! [MELCHISEDEK *sticks out very big foot.*] Ma 's awful glad to see you, Melchisedek! [*Embraces him fervently, and gives loud smack before releasing him.*] Now, tell me what they 're learnin' you while I open my little grip and get out all the nice things ma 's brung you! [*Opens grip, kneeling on floor.*]

MELCHISEDEK [*watching her eagerly*]. O ma! everybody 's so good to me! And I belong to all these nice boys and girls, and they 're learning me everything they know, and a lot they don't know, and I 'm having a dandy time!

MRS. GREEN [*still busy with satchel*]. That 's good! Be ye learnin' much? Here 's a cooky!

MELCHISEDEK [*eating cooky loudly*]. Lots!

MRS. GREEN. I knit ye some new socks! See! [*Holds up bright red ones.*]

MELCHISEDEK [*taking them, and holding them up, gazing at them admiringly*]. Gee! ain't them great!

MRS. GREEN [*taking out very gaudy, peculiar-patterned quilt*]. And I brung along another quilt. I was 'fraid you might not have enough kivers at your boarding place. Be ye gittin' enough to eat? [*Hands him sack of cookies, which he passes around to class during next few speeches, and all eat.*]

MELCHISEDEK. Oh, yes, ma! Everybody stuffs me—stomach and head!

MRS. GREEN. Well, now, ain't that nice? And be these here boys and gals takin' good care o' you?

MELCHISEDEK. You just bet they be, ma. They 're the nicest kids—

MRS. GREEN [*taking out an assortment of gaudy ties*]. I brung the boys some new ties—see! I knowed they 'd like some nice, pretty, bright ones, same as you do. I brung

one for the teacher, too—the perfesser! Poor feller! He ain't to blame 'cause he don't look no brighter. See, this is his! It's the brightest of the bunch. This is yours, young man—[*hands one to ROGER*].

ROGER [*bowing low with mock gratitude*]. O thanks!

MRS. GREEN [*hands one to IRA*]. And this is you'rn!

IRA [*with low bow*]. Many, many thanks! Your kindness shall never be forgotten.

JOSIE. Something new for them to quarrel about!

MRS. GREEN [*to IRA*]. Now, that's mighty nice and perlite o' you! Wish I'd brung ye two of 'em. But I'm coming reel often while my little boy's here. [*To HARVEY*] This one's yourn!

HARVEY. The thought of this tie will follow me, sleeping or waking. It will haunt my thoughts by day, and my dreams by night!

MRS. GREEN. Mercy on me! What perlite young fellers ye be! Now ain't you fine? I brung two more,—did n't you write me there was five boys, Melchisedek?

MELCHISEDEK. Two of 'em ain't here, ma. They're—out!

MRS. GREEN. Out where?

MELCHISEDEK. I don't know! Just—out!

MRS. GREEN. Now, ain't that a shame? When will they be in?

MELCHISEDEK. I don't know! They're sort o' knocked out—

MRS. GREEN. Who knocked 'em? Not you, Melchisedek?

MELCHISEDEK. No, ma!

MRS. GREEN. Well, I'll give theirs to the perfesser and he can give 'em to 'em when they do come in. [*Looks girls over critically, looking disappointed.*] Pshaw, now, don't you girls wear hair ribbons? I always wore hair ribbons when I was a little girl, and I did n't notice you did n't wear 'em. Maybe it's jest 'cause ye ain't got none. Anyhow, I brung ye some reel nice bright ones. Can't ye use 'em for collars or belts, or—

JOSIE. O certainly, Mrs. Green. For both at once!

MRS. GREEN. Wall now, can you? Ain't that nice? [*Distributes bright ribbons.*] You don't seem so tickled as the boys did, somehow! Maybe 't ain't your way!

JOSIE. No, 't ain't our way!

MRS. GREEN. I've got some gum for you, too. [*Passes packages around. Each takes a stick.*] Take two, Melchisedek! [*He does so.*] Ye ain't be'n smokin' cigarettes, have you, Melchisedek?

MELCHISEDEK. No, ma!

MRS. GREEN. I don't want you never should. They're bad for the brain, ain't they, young men?

HARVEY. No, madam, they are n't.

MRS. GREEN [*whirling, to face him*]. What's that, young feller? Don't they hurt the brain?

HARVEY. No, madam, they don't.

MRS. GREEN. Wal, now, that's news to me! I'd like to know why. Here I've been telling Melchisedek ever since the day he was born that they was bad for the brain. Why ain't they?

HARVEY. Because the boys who've got brains don't smoke them.

MRS. GREEN. Then my Melchisedek ain't in no danger! Ma's boy won't never, never smoke none, will he?

MELCHISEDEK. Did n't I say no? [*Straightens up proudly, and struts across stage.*] I'm a man! [*Stands up beside her, stretching on tiptoe.*] Hain't I growed, ma?

MRS. GREEN [*takes immense pie from satchel*]. I've got a pie here I'm going to take to the perfesser, if some o' you boys and girls will show me the way to go. I seem to fergit where his room is!

IRA [*winking at classmates*]. We'll all go. Come on! [*Motions for them.*]

HARVEY. Yes, let's show the lady we know the proper way to treat distinguished guests. [*Offers arm.*] Take my arm, madam!

MRS. GREEN [*staring at him*]. Mercy! Is it loose?

HARVEY. No, no! Just put your hand—

MRS. GREEN. Oh, I see! Hook on to you, you mean? [*Takes his arm.*] Now, ain't this nice? Good-bye, Melchisedek. Be a good boy!

[*Exeunt all but MELCHISEDEK and MILDRED.*]

MELCHISEDEK. Good-bye, ma! Gee! but you folks are good to me 'n ma!

MILDRED. *Mean* ma? Is your—er—ma—er—naturally mean?

MELCHISEDEK. My ma mean? What do you mean?

MILDRED. I mean—O nothing! The whole affair is very distasteful to me.

MELCHISEDEK. Dis-taste-ful? My ma?

MILDRED. Well, no,—not her, in particular. Just—everything!

MELCHISEDEK. You mean me! Don't I taste good to you?

MILDRED. Don't you—what? This is certainly too much!

MELCHISEDEK. Too much taste?

MILDRED. Oh, no, no! But, say, can you explain how that key disappeared?

MELCHISEDEK [*with crestfallen air*]. No, I can't! I only wish I could!

MILDRED. But nobody but you knew—

MELCHISEDEK. That's the dickens of it! I went to look, and—there it was! Just a minute more, Josie went to lock, and—there it was n't! It beats me! But I'm going to find it!

MILDRED. Easier said than done!

MELCHISEDEK. And you'd better bet I'm keeping watch o' that desk! Nobody'll get a chance to unlock it unless they catch this chicken asleep!

MILDRED. It's certainly too bad. With Dave and Lawrence in trouble—

MELCHISEDEK. Yes, Miss,—what's the matter with them two boys?

MILDRED. Such grammar!

MELCHISEDEK. Oh, I know! But, say, I 'm not so green as I look and act and talk most o' the time. I 've swallowed my Eighth Grade grammar, preface, appendix, covers, and all, but it hasn't had sufficient time to digest! But I 'm deeply concerned about those boys. I like them both, and there 's something that isn't just square in this affair. I want the truth of it!

MILDRED. [*Has stared at him in amazement during speech.*]
You take my breath!

MELCHISEDEK. You can't always size up even a Freshman by his clothes—and his relatives, Miss Mildred! Now, tell me about the boys!

MILDRED. Well, it is certainly a strange affair. It wouldn't be honorable for me to discuss class matters with outside students—underclassmen—but—

MELCHISEDEK [*resuming old manner and country dialect with broad smile*]. Ain't I your mascot?

MILDRED. Well, there isn't much actually known about it, anyway. Dave lost his geometry paper. A short time afterward it was found in Lawrence's pocket. Dave does n't know where he lost it. Lawrence does n't know where he found it. That 's all there is to it—so far as any one has found out.

MELCHISEDEK. 'Queer!

MILDRED. Very!

MELCHISEDEK [*after thoughtful pause*]. Lawrence never took it!

MILDRED. Who did?

MELCHISEDEK. To be sure, that 's the question. I don't know! Don't care! It 's none of my business! But I 'm ready to lick the hull bloomin' school if they dare say Lawrence Leonard 's the guilty guy! So there!
[*Goes to desk.*]

MILDRED [*laughing in spite of herself*]. X, you 're a bigger problem than ever! [*Exit R.*]

Enter ROGER and IRA, Right.

ROGER. I tell you Lawrence never—

IRA. And I say he must—

ROGER. I claim you don't know—

IRA. And I claim you don't—

ROGER. But I won't—

IRA. And I can't—

ROGER. And you sha'n't—

IRA. And you shall—

[*Boys gradually work down to front. MELCHISEDEK walks down behind them, and at this point steps between them.*]

MELCHISEDEK. Boys, listen to me.

BOYS [*disgusted*]. Humph!

MELCHISEDEK. I want to tell you something about the key!

BOYS [*eagerly*]. The key?

MELCHISEDEK. Yes, I'm sure that Junior girl has got it!

ROGER. Which one?

MELCHISEDEK. Why, she has black eyes, black hair, red ribbons—red dress—asks forty questions in a minute—

IRA. Lenore!

MELCHISEDEK. That's her! Now, if you fellows will watch the desk, she's sure to come to open it. I've driven her off once or twice already. Just lay low, somewhere around here, and you've got her! See?

ROGER. You bet! Say, X, you're a trump!

MELCHISEDEK. Another thing, boys, listen. [*Takes each by arm.*] In one of them big books on the desk, it says, "Two things equal to the same thing must be equal to each other."

IRA. But what's that got to do with—

MELCHISEDEK. Wait! If Roger is a Senior, and Ira is a Senior, mustn't Roger be equal to Ira, and Ira be equal to Roger, and—

ROGER. I get your point, X. See you later! Let's go get excused from class, Self, till we get this key business settled!

IRA. Sure! [*Shakes hands with MELCHISEDEK.*] Thank you, X. Just hang around here, and keep your eyes open till we get back.

[*Exeunt IRA and ROGER, C.*]

MELCHISEDEK [*at desk, studying*]. "A straight line is the shortest distance between two points." There's Dave—he's one point; here's Lawrence—he's a second point. [*Is writing on paper.*] There's the line! [*Thinks.*] There sure ought to be some straight string to pull them boys out o' this knot! Think hard, Melchisedek Green, think hard! Get some brain-move in your cranium! Let me see! Where have I seen a paper? Oh, I remember! [*Jumps up.*] That girl—same girl, too, plague take her!—picked it up off the floor, right over here [*walks to place*] and put it in that coat pocket—the coat hung here! Yes, sir! I remember. Now that's two! [*Holds up two fingers.*] Lawrence never even touched it. But the paper is, of course, found in his coat pocket, and—also, of course—he gets blamed for it. That's two more! [*Holds up another two fingers.*] Put two and two together, and you get—[*counts fingers*] one, two, three, four! It's as easy as counting your own fingers! Oh, I must write a note to tell Dave just how it was right away. [*Goes to desk to write note.*] "DEAR DAVE: Lawrence Leonard never touched your paper. I know how it got in his pocket. I'll tell you all about it when I can get a chance. Where can I meet you? I must confess"—Confess? That is n't just the right word to use. [*Scratches head.*] It is n't just what I mean, but I reckon it'll have to go. No time for consulting dictionaries now! I'll just sign it "X" and—

MRS. GREEN [*out C. Calls*]. Melchisedek!

MELCHISEDEK. Gee! There 's ma! [*Jumps up.*] Here I be, ma!

Enter ROGER and IRA, Left.

ROGER. It 's all right, X. We got off.

IRA. Sh! She 's coming! Run along, X! [*Exit MELCHISEDEK, C.*] Let 's just hide out here,—you on that side, I on this! [*They hide out C.—one on each side of entrance.*]

Enter LENORE, Right.

LENORE. At last! I thought that meddlesome Freshie was going to hang around here all day! For butting in to what does n't concern him, that kid takes the cake! But his ma's got him now, and I hope she 'll rock him safely to sleep till I get that pennant! My, what a triumph for us Juniors! The first time in six years that a Junior class has succeeded in swiping the Senior rag! Now to get my hands on it before— [*Has been busy at desk while talking, now goes to unlock drawer.*] If I just knew which drawer—

Enter ROGER and IRA, Center. One on each side of her.

ROGER [*lays hand on shoulder*]. The key, please, Lenore!

LENORE [*screams and jumps up*]. What do you mean, Roger Haynes?

IRA [*lays hand on other shoulder*]. Our key, you know! Better hand it over, and save yourself, and your class—

LENORE. [*Looks from one to another in exasperation and confusion. They eye her determinedly. Dramatic pause. Then she throws key on desk.*] There! take your precious key, and hang it around your dear little baby Freshman's neck!

IRA }
ROGER } [*together, bowing low*]. Thank you!

LENORE [*at R. entrance, bowing mockingly*]. Don't mention it! The pleasure is all mine! But look out you don't lose it in your sleep! [*Laughs mockingly, and exits, R.*]

IRA [*holds out hand*]. Shake, Haynes! Classmates like you and I should be—

ROGER [*taking his hand heartily*]. Friends forever! I always said you were a bully fine fellow!

IRA. And I always said you were the best all-around boy in this class!

ROGER. We can thank X for this—as well as the key! [*Pockets key.*]

IRA. Let's go tell him so! [*Exeunt ROGER and IRA, L., arm in arm.*]

Enter PROF. SCHUYLER and MISS IRVING, Center.

MISS IRVING. Are you sure Lawrence took the paper, Professor?

PROF. SCHUYLER. I'm sure of nothing, except that he had it in his pocket!

MISS IRVING. How it got there—

PROF. SCHUYLER. Is a mystery! [*Picks up MELCHISEDEK's note.*] Here's a paper—

MISS IRVING [*eagerly*]. Can it be—

PROF. SCHUYLER [*reads*]. "DEAR DAVE: Lawrence Leonard never touched your paper. I know how it got in his pocket. I'll tell you all about it when I get a chance. Where can I meet you? I must confess." Signed "X."

MISS IRVING. Dear me! Who can it be? X! Who's X? [*Takes note from PROF. SCHUYLER.*]

PROF. SCHUYLER. I've no idea. We must find X, and the mystery is solved! Let us take this to Dave, and see what light he may be able to—

Enter DAVE, Right.

PROF. SCHUYLER. Come in, Dave. We were just going to look for you.

DAVE. Anything new?

MISS IRVING. A clew, we think. Read this! [*Hands note to DAVE.*]

DAVE [*reads silently, they watching him anxiously*]. X!
Why, how could he—

PROF. SCHUYLER. Who is X?

DAVE. Melchisedek Green!

MISS IRVING. What? Why, he's only a Freshman.

PROF. SCHUYLER. He wouldn't know a geometry paper from a Latin translation.

MISS IRVING. Certainly not!

PROF. SCHUYLER. Then that eliminates X from the problem!

DAVE. Yes, that cancels X. Still, the boy—

PROF. SCHUYLER. He says "confess"—

DAVE. What could he have to confess?

MISS IRVING. There's some mystery—

Enter MELCHISEDEK, between ROGER and IRA, arm in arm, Left.

MELCHISEDEK. Why, I'd be ashamed of the pesky old school, if I thought—

IRA. You're right, X, and Roger and I can never thank you enough for this, can we, old fellow? [*IRA and ROGER shake hands.*]

Enter JOSIE, EDITH, MILDRED, HARVEY, Right.

JOSIE [*points to ROGER and IRA*]. A miracle!

MILDRED. It took X to solve the problem we've been wrestling with for four years. At last—

ROGER. Ira and I are—

IRA. Pals! [*Throws arm over ROGER's shoulder.*]

HARVEY. Satisfactorily demonstrated, Q. E. D.

ROGER. And here's the key, Josie.

ALL. The key! The key!

JOSIE. But where—

IRA. X put us next to the scheme, and we caught the culprit red-handed!

JOSIE. Who did?

ROGER. Ira and I.

EDITH. Good for you!

IRA. And X!

ROGER. Don't forget X! It was all his doings!

[JOSIE goes to desk to open it, GIRLS with her. She sits, they stand behind her.]

Enter LAWRENCE, Left.

DAVE. But, X, this note! Come in, Lawrence.

MELCHISEDEK. That note! Gee whillikens! I thought I'd lost that tarnal thing! You see, Dave, you lost that paper right over here!

DAVE [*eagerly*]. Yes.

MELCHISEDEK. Lawrence's coat hung right above it—up here!

LAWRENCE [*eagerly*]. Yes!

MELCHISEDEK. Along comes a girl—

ALL [*eagerly*]. Who?

MELCHISEDEK. Well—er—none of this class—nor mine! She sees the paper on the floor and says she to herself, "That paper has dropped out o' that coat!" See?

ALL [*eagerly*]. Yes!

MELCHISEDEK. Well, she picks it up and stuffs it in the pocket, thinking she's doing somebody a good turn. See? The paper is yours. The coat's Lawrence's. See? You don't know. Lawrence don't know! But I saw it all with my two eyes—and when it all had time to get through my thick head what the blooming row was all about, I remembered and—

DAVE [*slapping him on back*]. Found the value of X!

MELCHISEDEK [*innocently*]. X stands for "10" on pa's watch!

LAWRENCE [*shaking hands with him*]. X stands for 100 in our class. I can't ever thank you—

MELCHISEDEK. Should hope not! 'T ain't fair! "A straight line is the shortest distance between two points." Here was you—one point! Here was Dave,—another point! I had to draw the line straight, didn't I, when I knew how?

ROGER. But it took two straight lines to make an X,—one line between Ira and me!—you drew that line with the key. The other line between Lawrence and Dave—you drew that with the paper. When you crossed them—there was X.

MELCHISEDEK. Maybe so! Maybe so! I didn't want to be crossed out!

ALL. Never!

JOSIE [*coming down, with pennant on cane*]. X saved the pennant! He shall be our standard bearer! [*Handing pennant to him, which he lifts high.*]

ALL. Hurrah for X! [*At sides of stage, leaving X in center of ring.*]

HARVEY. X is It!

MRS. GREEN *steps in entrance at Center.*

MRS. GREEN. Melchisedek! [*He turns.*] Come and kiss me good-bye!

MELCHISEDEK. Yes, ma. [*Backs toward C., with pennant, as curtain falls.*]

CURTAIN

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