

## Around the Room

MS. PETOSA TOLD US a little about who she was. It was boring stuff about where she originally came from, and how she always wanted to teach, and she left her job on Wall Street about six years ago to pursue her “dream” and teach kids. She ended by asking if anyone had any questions, and Julian raised his hand.

“Yes ...” She had to look at the list to remember his name. “Julian.”

“That’s cool about how you’re pursuing your dream,” he said.

“Thank you!”

“You’re welcome!” He smiled proudly.

“Okay, so why don’t you tell us a little about yourself, Julian? Actually, here’s what I want everyone to do. Think of two things you want other people to know about you. Actually, wait a minute: how many of you came from the Beecher lower school? About half the kids raised their hands. “Okay, so a few of you already know each other. But the rest of you, I guess, are new to the school, right? Okay, so everyone think of two things you want other people to know about you—

and if you know some of the other kids, try to think of things they don't already know about you. Okay? Okay. So let's start with Julian and we'll go around the room."

Julian scrunched up his face and started tapping his forehead like he was thinking really hard.

"Okay, whenever you're ready," Ms. Petosa said.

"Okay, so number one is that—"

"Do me a favor and start with your names, okay?" Ms. Petosa interrupted. "It'll help me remember everyone."

"Oh, okay. So my name is Julian. And the number one thing I'd like to tell everyone about myself is that ... I just got Battleground Mystic for my Wii and it's totally awesome. And the number two thing is that we got a Ping-Pong table this summer."

"Very nice, I love Ping-Pong," said Ms. Petosa. "Does anyone have any questions for Julian?"

"Is Battleground Mystic multiplayer or one player?" said the kid named Miles.

"Not those kinds of questions, guys," said Ms. Petosa. "Okay, so how about you. ..." She pointed to Charlotte, probably because her desk was closest to the front.

"Oh, sure." Charlotte didn't hesitate for even a second, like she knew exactly what she wanted to say. "My name is Charlotte. I have two sisters, and we just got a new puppy named Suki in July. We got her from an animal shelter and she's so, so cute!"

"That's great, Charlotte, thank you," said Ms. Petosa. "Okay, then, who's next?"

## Lamb to the Slaughter

*"LIKE A LAMB to the slaughter": Something that you say about someone who goes somewhere calmly, not knowing that something unpleasant is going to happen to them.*

I Googled it last night. That's what I was thinking when Ms. Petosa called my name and suddenly it was my turn to talk.

"My name is August," I said, and yeah, I kind of mumbled it.

"What?" said someone.

"Can you speak up, honey?" said Ms. Petosa.

"My name is August," I said louder, forcing myself to look up. "I, um ... have a sister named Via and a dog named Daisy. And, um ... that's it."

"Wonderful," said Ms. Petosa. "Anyone have questions for August?"

No one said anything.

"Okay, you're next," said Ms. Petosa to Jack.

“Wait, I have a question for August,” said Julian, raising his hand. “Why do you have that tiny braid in the back of your hair? Is that like a Padawan thing?”

“Yeah.” I shrug-nodded.

“What’s a Padawan thing?” said Ms. Petosa, smiling at me.

“It’s from *Star Wars*,” answered Julian. “A Padawan is a Jedi apprentice.”

“Oh, interesting,” answered Ms. Petosa, looking at me. “So, are you into *Star Wars*, August?”

“I guess.” I nodded, not looking up because what I really wanted was to just slide under the desk.

“Who’s your favorite character?” Julian asked. I started thinking maybe he wasn’t so bad.

“Jango Fett.”

“What about Darth Sidious?” he said. “Do you like him?”

“Okay, guys, you can talk about *Star Wars* stuff at recess,” said Ms. Petosa cheerfully. “But let’s keep going. We haven’t heard from *you* yet,” she said to Jack.

Now it was Jack’s turn to talk, but I admit I didn’t hear a word he said. Maybe no one got the Darth Sidious thing, and maybe Julian didn’t mean anything at all. But in *Star Wars Episode III: Revenge of the Sith*, Darth Sidious’s face gets burned by Sith lightning and becomes totally deformed. His skin gets all shriveled up and his whole face just kind of melts.

I peeked at Julian and he was looking at me. Yeah, he knew what he was saying.