

# First Day at Peterson

By Emily Cameron

My stained Converse clicked against the ground as I weaved my way through the crowd of teenage students. "Oh, my God, I've missed you so much over the summer!" a blonde girl exclaimed as she flung herself into the arms of another girl in a warm embrace. I jostled past them and glanced around in utter confusion. I had no idea where I was and where I needed to go.

"Excuse me; have you received your schedule yet?" I felt a gentle hand touch my shoulder and I turned around. A smiling lady was holding a stack of little, square papers, looking at me questioningly. I shook my head.

"Can I have your name, please?" the lady said.

"Um, I'm Emily. Emily Cameron," I told her.

The lady shuffled through her stack of papers and handed me one of them. "Here you go. This shows you what classes and teachers you will be having for the rest of the school term."

I took the paper from her and nodded. "Thanks."

My first class was English, in room B3. I nudged my way through a group of eighth graders and headed in the direction of my classroom. All the students were wearing their most fashionable clothes in order to make a good impression on everyone on the first day of school. I had chosen my outfit carefully; something casual and understated, but still trendy: a long-sleeved white shirt with lace detailing across the back, dark washed skinny jeans, and my white Converse tennis shoes. My dark brown hair was gathered back in a high ponytail.

As I navigated my way to English class, I heard the bell ring, signifying that first period was about to begin. The door to B3 was open, and I stepped inside after a moment's hesitation. Many students were already sitting down at their desks, and they glanced up to look at me as I entered the room. I could feel their eyes on me, judging me, as I walked toward an empty desk. I slipped off my backpack and quietly sat down, feeling the other students' eyes trained on mine.

As I listened to my teacher, Mrs. Heidig, drone on about the topics that we would be learning in English this year, my mind wandered. I thought about how unfair it was that I had to transfer to a different school for seventh grade. I had attended the same school, Don Callejon, for seven years: from kindergarten all the way through sixth grade. I had tons of friends, I was popular, I was happy. And just

when I had finally felt like I fitted in, my parents had decided that they were going to transfer me to Peterson, because Don Callejon wasn't challenging enough for me. It wasn't fair.

When the bell rang, Mrs. Heidig dismissed the class and the students clambered out of their seats, chatting happily to each other as they walked out the door. I crammed my binders and folders back into my bag and slung my backpack over my shoulder as I left the classroom alone and headed to my next class.

Throughout the rest of the day, I navigated my way to each of my classrooms without too much difficulty. I kept to myself and rarely talked to any of the other students. I tried to make a good first impression on the teachers, and raised my hand when I knew the answer to a question.

During fourth period PE class, my teacher, Ms. Yee, asked everybody to partner up for an activity. The other students immediately grabbed each other and argued over who was going to be with whom. *Crap*, I thought as I glanced nervously at the students. *I don't know anybody in this class!*

A girl with shoulder-length dark brown hair and olive skin tapped my shoulder. I turned around to face her. "Do you have a partner?" she asked. I shook my head no. "Do you want to be partners, then?"

"Oh, um . . . sure," I said, relieved. "What's your name?"

"Stephanie," she replied. "You?"

"I'm Emily."

The activity consisted of us tossing a tennis ball to each other overhand. Since I had relatively good hand-eye coordination, I never failed to catch the ball, but unfortunately my throwing skills weren't that great.

"Sorry!" I called as Stephanie dodged to avoid the ball that narrowly missed her face. As she tossed it back to me, the tuneless sound of the bell rang through the air, announcing that fourth period was over. Pulling out my crumpled schedule paper, I smoothed out the wrinkles and checked to see what was next: lunch. A feeling of dread and anxiety curdled in my stomach. *Who am I going to eat lunch with? I hardly know anybody here! I don't want to eat lunch alone.*

As I headed out of the gym, I felt a hand touch my forearm and turned around to see who it was: Stephanie. "Hey," she said, "want to have lunch together?"

I felt a surge of relief. I wouldn't be eating lunch alone, after all. "Yeah, I'd love to. That would be great," I responded.

Stephanie smiled, and together we walked to the cafeteria, side by side. She told me that she was new to Peterson this year, and she didn't know anybody in the school. "Me, too!" I said as we settled down at a table in the corner of the cafeteria. I explained to her how I had just transferred from Don Callejon.

"Cool. I was from Buchser," she explained, referring to another school in our district. I nodded and unwrapped my ham and cheese sandwich, removing it from its sealed Ziploc bag.

After lunch, I hugged Stephanie goodbye and headed to my fifth period Social Studies class. After fifty minutes of listening to the teacher, Mrs. Martin, drone on about the lesson plan for the entire school year, I found my way to my final class, which I had been looking forward to the most: Orchestra.

The teacher was an older man with wrinkles and creases across his face and close-cropped, thinning white hair. His dark eyes were a stormy greenish-gray, which matched his gruff temper. He introduced himself as Mr. Pickard and explained to us the many concerts that we would be performing in during the school year.

By the end of the day, I was exhausted, and I had a pounding headache that was probably caused by my brain being crammed with too much new information. But, as I waited at the curb for my mom to pick me up, I felt a surge of positivity. Maybe my first year at Peterson Middle School wouldn't be so bad after all.