

# Treating Others as You Want to be Treated

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Julia Anne turned out of her driveway and trudged down the street, past 3 houses and stopped at the end of her best friend Rachel's driveway. That was where the school bus would pick them up.

She hiked her backpack further up her back and thought about the large piece of cake left over from her 12th birthday party that would have been in her lunch box right then, had not her "to-cute-to-resist" little brother Nathanael showed up in the kitchen at the moment her mother was putting it into her lunch box. Of course Nate saw their mom packing the rest of the cake into her lunch and began to cry. They had both tried to appease him by saying that his 5th birthday was in 2½ weeks and that this was Julia Anne's birthday cake. But no, he would have at least half of the piece. So finally her mom had given in. Now half of that delicious chocolate piece of cake was in the fridge waiting to be eaten by Nate after lunch. That thought annoyed her.

Just then, Rachel came out of her house with the greeting, "Hi Jules! Ready for the quiz? I was up until 11:30 last night studying. Did you stay up late? Boy am I tired! I can't wait 'til school's out, then I go home and read my new book!"

That rush of words should have overwhelmed quiet Julia Anne, but she was quite used to Rachel.

"No, I went to bed at the usual time, but I don't believe I am ready for it. You know how I am when it comes to tests... How's your mom?"

"Oh, she had a migraine last night, that's why she wasn't at church, but she felt a lot better this morning."

At that moment, their bus rounded the corner and stopped so they could board. They went to their usual bench near the back of the bus, but it was occupied by a small girl with long brown hair, just staring out the window. Julia Anne had never seen her before. She noted that the girl looked kind of sad. She wondered why. Glancing at Rachel, she saw that her friend didn't think much of their seat being occupied by a strange girl. They sat on the bench behind her.

Both of the girls were quiet the entire ride. Usually Rachel was very talkative, but today, she must have been nervous or tired. Julia Anne was thinking about the quiz that afternoon. She absolutely hated tests and quizzes. And this was a math test: math was her absolute worst subject. Julia Anne's average score on a math test or quiz was 83%! She couldn't seem to grasp the concept of pre-algebra especially, not to mention the multiplication and division of fractions. She was not looking forward to Algebra 1 next year. Rachel seemed to be a wiz at everything, though.

As they entered their classroom, Julia Anne noticed that the new girl was coming into their classroom, too. After everybody was seated, except for the girl, Miss Roster, their homeroom teacher, called the girl over to her and said, "Please tell us your name, how old you are, what your favorite color is, and where you are from."

Julia Anne, Rachel, and some others giggled as the girl twirled her long hair around her finger nervously and looked at the floor. Miss Roster had a tradition of making new people tell the others what their favorite color is. Maybe because she was an art teacher. But when Miss Roster cleared her throat, everybody quieted down.

The girl said slowly with a heavy accent, "My name is Yulia Sotnikova. I am 12 years old. I came from Russia a little time ago."

Rachel, sitting behind Julia Anne, poked her and whispered, "You get to sit by the 'new girl'. Have fun and make sure she listens!" She giggled at her own "joke".

Julia Anne giggled too and nodded yes. She tried to think of some way to stump up this Yulia girl who didn't seem to know too much English. She would think of something before recess.

Julia Anne was still thinking when Miss Roster said, "Ok, everybody, pull out your pencils. Yulia, you can do a facts practice sheet while the other take their quizzes. You all have 20 minutes."

She came around the room and passed out the papers. Going back to her desk, she said, "When I say 'three', flip your papers over and start. One, two, three." she started her timer.

Julia Anne was distracted by Yulia beside her. Yulia was just staring at her paper. Finally she wrote something at the top of her page. Julia Anne leaned over to make out the figures. They spelled: Юлия. She guessed that was Yulia's name in Russian. She thought to herself: *Our names sound so much alike, that is probably how you spell my name in Russian, too, or something similar.* Some of the figures looked like backwards English letters. They fascinated her, and for a moment she pondered trying to befriend Yulia, but Rachel seemed to want to make times hard for Yulia, and Rachel was one of Julia Anne's best friends, so she decided to go with Rachel's way, at least for the time being. Suddenly, she remembered her test. Trying to focus, Julia Anne labored over the problems.

After the 20 minutes was up, Miss Roster sent the class out to recess. The air was chilly, seeing it was October, and October in Northern New York can be quite cold. Julia Anne, Rachel, and the popular girl in the class, who also happened to be Julia Anne's other BFF, Mckenzie, huddled together in a group. They were talking about the upcoming school play, "Frozen the Musical". "I'm sure I'm going to get the part of Elsa!" Mckenzie exclaimed. "I love the idea of Frozen the Musical!"

"I wish I could be Anna, but the odds are against me with that Always-gets-her-way-cause-her-dad's-rich Meagan auditioning. She is more than likely to get the part because Mrs. Hayes likes her. I don't see why, though. Probably because she wants to get on the good side of Megan's dad, which she certainly does." Rachel said as she rolled her eyes.

Julia Anne thought: *Rach would make a really good Anna, though I would like the part, myself.*

Just then she saw Yulia sitting by herself crosslegged under a tree.

She said to the others, "Should we invite Yulia over to join our group?"

Mckenzie and Rachel started, and Mckenzie said, "Why should we do that? We have been our own little group since 3rd grade! I don't think we should let anybody else join now. Don't you agree, Rach?"

"Oh, I totally agree!" Rachel exclaimed.

"But I meant if we got her to come over here, we could trick her or make fun of her or something like that." Julia Anne said. "I didn't know that's what you meant. You should have said so at first!" Mckenzie exclaimed. "Yes, I think that would be funny. I think we should get her to talk and then make fun of her accent."

"Ok, I'll go get her." Rachel giggled.

She went over toward the girl and said something. Yulia shook her head with a puzzled look on her face. Rachel motioned over toward her friends and said something else. Yulia smiled and got up and the two headed back over to Julia Anne and Mckenzie.

When Yulia smiled, Julia Anne felt a pang of guilt. Deep inside her, she wanted to get to know this strange girl, but the thought of pleasing her friends was stronger. She knew that Yulia would be hurt by what they were about to do and that is not what Jesus would want her to do, but she quickly pushed this thought from her mind before it changed her mind.

Rachel and Yulia came over to the others. Rachel winked at Julia Anne, and she gave her a half smile back.

"Helloo." Yulia said shyly, with a heavy accent.

"Helloo, my niame ees Mckenzie." Mckenzie imitated with an exaggerated accent, then laughed.

Rachel and Julia Anne giggled, too.

"My niame ees Rachel, and me favoeret color ees red, 'cause me likes poppies." Rachel said, with the same kind of accent. All the girls laughed hard at this. But poor Yulia's face turned really red. She turned around and ran back to the school. The girls were bent over with their laughter. But then the bell rang and the girls had to go back to their studies. Julia Anne found that she got a 78%. Miss Roster scolded her.

That night, Julia Anne didn't eat much for supper and didn't sleep at all that night. She couldn't stop thinking about how she was the one to suggest bullying Yulia in that way. Just before morning she decided that she would do her best to be kind to Yulia today, no matter what her friends might say. She knew that they wouldn't like it, and she would have a hard time making up her mind to do so. She prayed and asked Jesus to help her.

But Yulia wasn't at school that day, nor the next. By Thursday morning, Julia Anne was beside herself with worry. What had happened that kept Yulia from school? Probably the teasing. *If she isn't at school today, she thought, I am going to ask Miss Roster where she lives and I am going to visit her and apologize. I might even buy her something to make up.* Julia Anne grabbed her allowance from the past 3 weeks, and stuffed it into her backpack. Then, feeling in a good mood, she grabbed a stick of her precious gum and gave it to Nate with a hug, which was unusual. Her grandma had given her a package of gum, but her brother only got chocolates, so he was jealous. Gum in her family was very rare. He looked surprised, but his sister just winked at him so he smiled and started to open it. But she said, "Save it until after lunch!"

He giggled and stuffed it into his pocket, then ran off. Julia Anne gulped down her cereal, and raced out the door.

Rachel was taken aback at her friend's mood, because she had been sulky the past few days. But Julia Anne gave her a stick of gum, too. So she soon forgot it and talked all the way to school.

Yulia wasn't at school today, either. Julia Anne was very worried all day long. After the bell rang, all the children rushed out the door, eager to go, but Julia Anne stayed in her seat hoping that neither Mckenzie nor Rachel would notice her absence. They didn't come back, so she guessed they hadn't realized that she wasn't among them. Julia Anne went up to Miss Roster. "Excuse me, ma'am, but I was wondering where Yulia has been." She said nervously.

"Oh, Yulia?" Miss Roster asked, "Her mother called yesterday and said that she had been sick the day before and wouldn't be at school that day either. I guess that she is still sick today, too. That is too bad because I kind of liked that girl. She has only gone to our school once, too. It is nice of you to think of her."

At this Julia Anne blushed, knowing she didn't deserve this praise. But she said nothing.

"Do you by any chance have her address?" Julia Anne asked. She was scared to ask this, but she didn't know why.

"Actually I do. But why do you want it?"

“Well, I thought if she’s sick, I could go visit her and maybe bring her something to cheer her up.” Julia Anne said quickly.

“That is very nice of you! Yes, I’ll copy the address right here for you.” Miss Roster scrawled something on a scrap of paper and handed it to her. “Here you are. Tell her I hope she get’s well soon.” she smiled.

“Thank you, Miss Roster! I will!” Julia Anne raced out the door. Now she would need her mother’s approval. But she thought she could get that easy enough. After looking at the address, she saw that it wasn’t far from her own house.

Running home, Julia Anne thought about what Yulia would think. She would probably be scared at first, but Julia Anne would be sure to explain quickly. Then maybe Yulia could teach her some Russian. That would be pretty cool. She was getting excited.

Finally she was home. Julia Anne raced up the front steps and entered the kitchen. She said hi to her mom who was preparing supper, winked at her brother, and raced upstairs to take care of her backpack and pull her money out of it. She put the money into her sweater pocket and ran downstairs. Pulling her mother aside, she explained everything and then asked if she could go visit Yulia. Her mother said, “You know, Julia Anne, that was very wrong of you and your friends to do that to Yulia, but I believe that you are truly sorry. I will think over what you said, and I will let you know in a few minutes if you can go see her. Right now, why don’t you go change out of your school uniform.” Julia Anne went back upstairs and changed, careful to switch the money from her school sweater’s pocket, to her after-school pant’s pocket. She pulled on her favorite I ♥ NY sweatshirt, and then sat on her bed and bowed her head.

“Dear Heavenly Father,” she prayed, “I was wrong for what I did to Yulia on Monday. Please forgive me. Help Mommy, if it is your will to let me go visit her so I can ask forgiveness of her, too. I pray that You would give me grace to be a good friend to her. Please help her to understand and forgive me so that we can be friends. Give me courage Lord, because I am very nervous. Thank you for that I can come to you because of Jesus. In His name I pray, Amen.”

Julia Anne felt very relieved and refreshed after she finished praying. She went downstairs and her mother said that it was OK to go. Julia Anne whooped and raced out the door.

There was a little gift shop on the way to Yulia’s house, So Julia Anne stopped there. Looking around, she couldn’t decide what she wanted to get. There was candy, small toys, flowers, stickers, books, souvenirs, and lots more. Finally, she decided to get Yulia a bar of raspberry-chocolate candy as well as a packet of stickers and two daisies. She asked the clerk to wrap all of them, and he did so. She thought that it looked really pretty with the flowers sticking out of the bag on either side. Paying the clerk, she went outside.

She shivered. It was cold. Julia Anne pulled the slip of paper out of her pocket and glanced at the address. It wasn’t too far away. Walking briskly, she headed down the sidewalk toward Yulia’s house. In about 5 minutes, she was walking up the driveway.

The gray house was quite small. Most of the paint had been chipped away. A paintless, shabby fence enclosed the humble yard, and weeds had taken over the tiny garden beside the house. This time shivering with nervousness, she prayed silently that the Lord would calm her heart. Then she approached the door. When she knocked, a short, thin woman answered.

Quickly, Julia Anne explained that she had come to see Yulia.

“Oh! How nice of you! Come right in! My name Mrs. Sotnikova. What is your name?”

My name is Julia Anne. I am pleased to meet you Mrs. Sotnikova. My teacher said that Yulia has been sick. I hope she is feeling better.”

“Yes, she was feeling somewhat better today. It was so nice of you to visit her. I will go let her know now that you are here.” She turned and left.

Mrs. Sotnikova was back in a minute.

“Yulia said that she didn’t make any friends at school. She was wondering who you could be. She did say, though, that some girls had made fun of her. You weren’t one of them, were you?”

When she heard this, her face turned cherry red with shame and embarrassment. “Actually, Mrs. Sotnikova, I was. That is why I am here: to ask Yulia for forgiveness. I am very sorry, because I know that is not what Jesus would have wanted me to do. I hope that both of you will understand.”

“You are a dear girl, Julia, for coming to apologize. We know Jesus, too. I am sure Yulia will readily forgive you.

“Yulia’s father just passed away last month, so we have been very sad. I was born in the US, but my family moved to Russia when I was 11. I learned Russian quickly and have been speaking it for over 30 years. But it was there I met my husband and Yulia was born. But we just moved back here to New York to be close to my parents. We have only been in the USA for 2½ weeks. Yulia only knows a little English, because I almost never spoke it when she was growing up. “Thank you, again, though, for coming. You may go see her now if you wish. Come right this way.”

She led the way down a dimly lit hallway and to a tiny bedroom. Yulia was sitting up in bed reading a book whose title spelled: Маленькая принцесса. The characters again peaked Julia Anne’s interest.

When Yulia looked up and saw her, she gasped. “You *are* one of those girls!” she exclaimed. And then in an almost inaudible voice she said, “Why did you come here?”

After a moment, Mrs. Sotnikova left to let the girls talk.

“I am here, Yulia, because I came to ask your forgiveness. I was very wrong for what I did on Monday. I know that is not the way Jesus would have wanted me to treat you or anybody else. Please forgive me.”

“Oh I forgive you--uh... I don’t believe I know your name.”

“My name is Julia Anne. My friends call me Jules, though.” she giggled. “I kind of like that name!”

Yulia laughed too. “Your name is kind of like my own. We can be friends?”

“Yes, I would love to be friends! What book are you reading?”

“Roughly translated into English, it is *A Little Princess*. A very good book.”

“Yes! I have read that book before in English, of course, and I really liked it.” Julia Anne said. “Here, I brought you a gift to help you get better. I hope you like it. Open it!” Julia Anne said handing it to her.

Smiling, Yulia thanked her and opened it. “Oh! Thank you!!”

“You are welcome. Can you teach me some Russian?” Julia Anne asked timidly.

“Yes, I would love to.” her new friend answered. “And you can help me with English!”

Julia Anne was thankful for the new friend she had made, but she also learned to treat others as she herself would like to be treated. Yulia told her that in Russian her name was Yulia, too! Rachel and McKenzie eventually accepted Yulia into their group, and the foursome had a lot of fun together. They helped Yulia with her English as she taught them Russian. Julia Anne was happy that she had taken the time to go visit Yulia when she was sick and also apologize. Of course, the other girls apologized for the mean prank, too!