

Two Kindergarten Students and the President

I was sent to observe this very concerning kindergarten student, a boy with a dark and angry look fixed on his face, refusing to talk or even acknowledge the presence of other students or staff, staring intently straight ahead, tiny black leather jacket zipped up to his chin, rhythmically kicking the leg of his desk.

The teacher has been out for a couple of weeks so different substitutes have been trying to keep things running according to plan. The students do what they want while the sub is busy trying to figure things out. And with the level of boldness that they pursue their own interests, it's clear that they feel they have no worry of being noticed. A few students wait patiently on the rug, but most of the others are conducting their own business all about the room.

Two little men across the room are setting up a wager. I can hear everything they're saying, but because I'm intently watching this one other student, they think I am unaware of them and the schemes they're cooking up.

"I think he's the president," says one little man to the other. They both look my way and ponder what to do about it. "Go ask him," says the other.

"I'm not doing that, you ask him."

"If you ask him, I'll give you all the money in my house. My house has a lot of money in it."

This is all it takes to convince the first little man. Slowly he inches toward me from across the room, taking care to avoid my notice. Soon this little person is standing right next to me. His head comes up to my pants pocket. Now he finds himself in this spot where he doesn't know what to do and he would probably like to sneak away and forget about all the money he was promised. I help him out and turn to him, asking if I can help him.

"Are you the president?" his words burst forth like they had been held under pressure. "No. Look," I say and I show him my visitor badge. "I'm just a visitor."

"Oh," he says, as if the badge explains everything. You couldn't be the president and a visitor at the same time, or, if you were the president you would have a badge that said President.

He dashes off to report back to his partner in crime. "He said no," and then he circles back to the deal they had made. "When do I get the money?" The other little man is a quick thinker and he changes up the deal without even a pause in their conversation. "If he really was the president I would give you all the money in my house, but he said no." The first little man accepts this like it makes all kinds of sense to him now. "Yeah."

The lesson has still not started, so there's plenty of time for these two characters to seek another adventure. Meanwhile the boy I'm concerned with is methodically taking one item at a time off his desk and dropping it right to the floor, while a teacher assistant is asking him to use his words to tell her how he feels. If you have to ask how he feels you have clearly not been paying attention to anything about him. Little point of fact, he hasn't uttered a word all morning, and many people have tried to get him to talk, so labeling and conveying his feelings verbally is probably not the thing you are going to get him to do at this particular moment of rage. Instead, this upset little guy answers the question by slowly walking around the room and clearing each desk in the same methodical manner, the teacher assistant in pursuit, still asking him to use his words.

Maybe the betting bandits have already made a wager about whether anyone is going to get him to talk about his feelings.