

JINA JEONG

Project Playground



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Chapter 1



PARKS AND PLAYGROUNDS

Jina Jeong skipped ahead of her parents as they made their way back to their car. She could feel the bubble tea she had just finished sloshing around in her stomach. Jina stopped to give her stomach a rest. In front of her was a yard sign stuck into the ground.

“What does this mean?” she asked, pointing to the sign. She read the words out loud. “Support a greener neighborhood, vote yes on Prop-oh-sis . . . Proposition 10.”

Jina turned to her parents. “What’s a ‘proposition’? And why do you have to vote to support a greener neighborhood?”

“A proposition is a proposal to make a change to our laws or take some kind of action,” Mom said. “Proposition 10 is asking for money to help build a new city park.”

“I love parks!” Jina said. “I would vote yes.” She looked at her parents. “Are you going to vote for it?”

“I haven’t really thought about it,” Dad said. “But I’m in favor of parks too.”

They started walking again. Then Jina stopped. “You know, kids are the ones who use parks the most. But we don’t get to vote. That doesn’t seem fair,” she said.

Mom nodded. “Well, even if you aren’t old enough to vote, there is something you can do,” she said.

“What’s that?” Jina asked.

“You can try to get others to vote the way you think they should,” Mom said.

Jina grinned. “You’re right!” she said.

“Mom, Dad, you should vote yes on Proposition 10!”

“Okay, Jina!” Dad laughed. “I’ll definitely consider it.”

Later that week, Jina went to her grandmother's house after school.

"What are you making for dinner, Halmoni?" Jina asked.

"I went to the Korean market today," Halmoni said. She opened the fridge and pulled out a package of meat. "We can have bulgogi."

Then she smiled at Jina. "And mochi ice cream for dessert!"

"Thanks, Halmoni!" Jina said, hugging her grandmother.

Jina's parents came to pick her up just as they were finishing eating. "Hey, is that strawberry mochi ice cream?" Dad asked, reaching out and grabbing one off Jina's plate.



“Dad!” Jina said in protest.

But soon she was laughing as Dad rubbed his stomach, saying, “Mmm-mmm!”

“How was the school meeting?” asked Halmoni.

“Actually, it was pretty interesting,” Mom said. She put her hand on Jina’s shoulder. “You’ll like this, Jina. The school is planning on adding some new playground equipment!”

“Really?” Jina asked, a piece of mochi halfway to her mouth. “That’s so great! My friends and I would love a climbing wall!”

“In my day, our school had a couple of swings and a jungle gym,” Dad said. “Playgrounds are so fancy now.”

“Lots of schools have climbing walls on their playgrounds,” Jina said. “Sofia said her cousin’s school has a cool obstacle course.” Her eyes lit up. “We should get an obstacle course too!”

“Um, Jina?” Mom said. “At the meeting, we just talked about how much was in the budget for the equipment. No one said anything about getting ideas from the students about what to add.”

“What?” Jina asked. “You mean they aren’t going to ask us what we want?”



Mom and Dad looked at each other and shrugged.

“But we’re the ones who use the playground!” Jina said. She was almost yelling.

Dad patted Jina on the shoulder. “That’s true, Jina,” he said. “The discussion wasn’t really focused on the playground design. It was more about whether we needed to raise money for the equipment.”

“It’s just like how kids aren’t allowed to vote,” Jina said. “No one is giving us a say in stuff that matters to us.”

“I’m sorry, Jina,” Mom said. “But hopefully you’ll like the new equipment. I’m sure they have some good ideas.”

Jina huffed. “Maybe,” she said. But she still thought the kids should help decide what their playground was going to look like.

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