2002 First Place Personal Narrative

A Running Sunday

"Are you listening, Jaehee Hwang?" A tall skinny lady walked towards me. This was the fifth time she had told me to hush up. "I'll have to ask you to leave if you are not reverent." Sister Jung always made me feel like a sinner. I knew she was right. She was the primary teacher; she was always right.

As soon as she turned around, I began to giggle with Ji Young again, "hee hee look at Sister Jung, she stands so straight like one of those British guards with big puffy hats and red uniform hee hee."

Sister Jung swooshed around, placed her index finger on her lips, and looked straight at me. She had long, straight black hair, without a single strand out of place. She wore an ironed white blouse and a knee length jean skirt with two rose imprints on it.

I hated it when I knew I had to listen to her.

After church, I raced my brother to the parking lot, and I jumped into the car. From a block away from our house, my dad turned his head to the backseat while both of his hands were on the steering wheel. "Jaehee, are you listening?"

"Just drive honey." Now my mom turned her head and fixed her eyes on mine. "How many times do we have to tell you? Listen to Sister Jung, she is a wonderful primary teacher and "

"You're the bishop's daughter I know, Mom, I know I have to be good and blah, blah, blah."

"Jaehee Hwang! Ugh! Don't you ever get sick of hearing your name?"

When my father reached the garage I said, "No. I think it sounds beautiful." I gave my mom a big smile and hopped out of the car. I rushed into the house. Ring! Ring! Ring! I took three big leaps into the kitchen. "Hello?"

"Jaehee! You have to come to my house! I have a big surprise!"

"Okay wait. Mooommm! Can I pleaasee go to Ji Young's house?"

"If you promise to be reverent every Sunday."

"I promise."
"I don't want to hear any more troubles from you, young lady, so keep out of mess."

"I promise."

"Jaehee I'm serious. Don't go wild."

I rolled my eyes and raced out the door.

I ran for two blocks until I reached Ji Young's house. When I got to her front lawn, my eyes widen and I jumped up and down. "I can't believe it!"

Ji Young was feeding seeds to a flock of chickens.

"But but how did you get them?"

"These are my uncle's chickens. He lives on a farm and brought them here, because I never get to go to his farm."

"Woow can I feed them?"

"Sure." Ji Young handed me a handful of seeds.

I threw one seed at a time, aiming at the chicken's beaks.

"You shouldn't do that. The chickens might get angry."

"No they wouldn't." I hit a seed to one of the chicken's beak. "Score!" as I reached to get another seed, the chicken's head turned quickly at me. "Uh Ji Young, why is he staring at me like that?"

"Um I don't know but I think you should run!"

"Huh?" I turned around and saw the whole flock of chickens flapping their wings and started to run towards me.

"Run, Jaehee! Run!" Ji Young yelled with one hand on each of her cheeks. I fell to a puddle of mud, and felt a feather on my knees. I jumped up and started to run again. I felt sweat on my legs and my hair covered my eyes. I heard wings flapping behind me. I didn't know where I was running. Suddenly Ji Young yelled, "Turn right!" My neck automatically turned right, and there it was: an open door. I grabbed the big gray door, ran inside, tripped, and fell to the carpet.

Blank. Nothing was moving in my mind just pure blank. Ugh... something just drooled on me. A big, chubby, baby boy was sliming all over my face. He seemed to be around five months, very big for his age. He had a little scattered hair and his eyes were small thin lines. I faced down on the carpet, while he was pulling my hair. "Young Won, where are you?" A familiar voice rang through my ear. I turned my head so my cheek was still touching the rough carpet. Sister Jung stood there looking down at me. My mouth was half opened. Of all the open doors, I had to run into my primary teacher's house. She was still wearing her Sunday attire and her hair
was still in place. "Jaehee Hwang, what happened?" Sister Jung grabbed my arm tight and pulled me up. Young Won started to play with my shoelaces. Sister Jung looked straight into my eyes, as I stood there with my hair out of place. She had her eyes fixed on me. I looked down and noticed the trail of dirt I left on her floor. I realized that I had mud all over my neon orange T-shirt and jean shorts with a sandal missing.

"Uhm . . . I was running away from Ji Young's chickens." My eyes wandered to her peeling ceiling, hoping God would have mercy on me.

"Who let you in?" Her small black eyes were hunting mine.

"I . . . I . . . saw your door open and . . . and . . . I thought I would hide here." Sister Jung's tiny black eyes seemed darker than before. She started to tap her feet slowly with her hand on her hip. I looked down at a spot of Young Won's drool on her navy blue carpet, and said, "Please don't tell my mom."

Sister Jung's face was as firm as her stoic personality. Nothing on her face moved. It seemed like her eyes, nose, and mouth were super-glued right on her face.

"I'm really sorry," I said. "I'll not come into your house without asking you first."

"You intruded in my home and what would happen if the chickens came inside?"

My hands started to shake involuntarily and my knees felt light. My shoulders began to fall heavily on my body. Everything started to spin. "I'm really sorry." A silence followed my words. My forehead shined in sweat as I stood in front of Sister Jung. She didn't have any sympathy. She could have at least say, "It's okay, you were being chased by chickens after all." Was I supposed to ring her bell and ask her, "How are you Sister Jung, I'm running away from a flock of demonic chickens. May I stay here so I won't be eaten by them?" I hated her. She taught us to be nice and forgiving, yet she wouldn't even accept my apology. I wished she were chased by hundreds of chickens.

Tick. Tick. Tick. Sister Jung was perfectly erect without any motions on her face. Her chubby son began to make strange noises in the living room. My eyes followed his weird sounds to a big spacious room. It was full of plastic ivy plants and an antique lamp spread dull, gloomy light across the room. There was no television in the living room, but three blue bookshelves were lined up on her wall. All her books were lined up straight and her magazines were uniformly placed on top of a wooden table next to the blue bookshelves. Her picture frames were perfectly ordered on her wall. I turned around and there it was: the big gray door. I looked down at her old navy blue carpet and I saw my pile of dirt. I was doomed.

Ten minutes must have passed by and there was not a single word from Sister Jung. Young Won began to pull on my pants. Luckily, I wore my brother's superman belt. What an awkward moment. My primary teacher looked at me as if my next stop was hell as her son tried to pull my pants down. The belt loosened up and my pants began to loose around my waist. I stood there with my pants half falling on the navy blue carpet right next to a plastic ivy plant, as the clock ticked away.

Ring! Ring! Ring! Hallelujah! Sister Jung disappeared into her small kitchen, while I hurriedly pulled Young Won's hands away from my pants. "Hi Sister Kim, how are you? Oh you mean your chickens? Don't worry
about that, I'm sure you'll find them. Don't worry the chickens can't travel so far."

What was she doing? I thought she would mention my name in a second.

"You mean Jaehee?"

I knew I was busted. No more play time for the rest of my earthly life.

"You must have seen the wrong girl because Jaehee was with me the whole afternoon."

Huh? Did my perfect, never-sinning, primary teacher just lie? There was no way in heaven I had heard her right. Maybe I was hallucinating; just wishing that was what she had said.

"I hope you find all your chickens. Alright, I'll see you on Sunday. Good bye." Click. Once again the awkward moment, but this time I was looking at Sister Jung as if her next stop was hell while Young Won was rolling around in circles. Sister Jung turned around without any expression on her face and her eyes were focused on mine. "I'll see you on Sunday. Good night."

I slowly made my way towards her big gray door. I was puzzled. Why did she lie? Sister Jung had to be perfect; she was the primary teacher. Sister Jung's house seemed to become lighter. I looked at her living room again and saw a white box with dozens of pink roses and green leaves on it. The box was half closed and there were small candies inside. I noticed three stacks of disordered picture albums and scattered pictures around them. In the corner besides the window there was a huge brown piano. The chair was worn out with scratches. Before I reached the doorknob I saw a picture of her when she was around seven. Her hair was messy and she had mud all over her overalls.

The next Sunday, I was still fidgeting and giggling with Ji Young. After five minutes, Sister Jung walked towards me. She wore the same attire as last Sunday, but I saw a small spaghetti stain on her un-ironed white blouse. "Jaehee, would you please give us the closing prayer?"