

Progress Monitoring Probe 12

Mrs. Lee's Other House

One day I asked my friend Jin Lee if we could visit the firehouse where her mother is stationed. The station happens to be in our neighborhood, so we walked there on a Saturday morning.

Mrs. Lee greeted us at the station. "Welcome to my second home!" she said, referring to the several nights a month that she sleeps there. The first things I noticed were the uniforms and helmets, called "turnout gear," all neatly hanging on hooks on a wall. Jin told me that the gear can weigh as much as seventy pounds.

Mrs. Lee showed us the dormitory bedrooms where firefighters sleep, the exercise room where they stay fit, the kitchen, and the recreation room with its television, VCR, and shelves full of books. There were two gleaming fire trucks in the garage, and as we sat in one of the trucks, Mrs. Lee described the feeling of going on a call. "The sirens are on, the lights are flashing, and your heart is pumping," she said. "During the ride, I wonder what I'll find and whether I'll be able to help."

I asked Mrs. Lee about the skills a person needs to be a firefighter. "First, you have to be physically fit because you have to carry around a lot of heavy equipment and move quickly," she said. "And you need good instincts and the ability to stay calm in an emergency."

"I like doing something exciting and necessary," Mrs. Lee said when I asked her what she liked best about firefighting. When I asked her what she liked least about the job, she said, "The worst part of my job is when I am not able to help, and I don't like to go on false alarms."

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Mrs. Lee's Other House (Continued)

Walking back home from the fire station, my mind was buzzing with all I'd seen and learned. That night, lying in bed, I had a vision I hadn't had since I was a little girl. It was of me, dressed in full turnout gear, jumping out of a red truck to help people in need.

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