

A BIRTHDAY PARTY FOR JI-SUNG

BY CAROL KIM

**Today my brother Ji-Sung turns one year old!
So we are having a special party, a doljanchi,
to celebrate.**

Mother helps me put on my special dress,
called a hanbok. First the skirt and then the
jacket. "I look like a Korean princess!" I say,
twirling.

Swish, swish, swish. I love the sound my long silk
skirt makes when I walk.

"Jina, help me put on Ji-Sung's hanbok," Mother says.
We put a colorful striped jacket over his pants,
followed by a vest and belt. I put the black hat on
his head but he tugs it off. "I don't think he likes the
hat," I tell Mother.

The guests arrive, and everyone oohs and aahs over
the table overflowing with food. The towers of
oranges and apples, platters of rice cakes and bowls
of noodles and rice make my stomach growl. I
breathe in the sweet smell of the snowy white
birthday cake, and can almost taste it.

Then it is time for the doljabi. "This is the part where
the baby foretells his future by what he picks,"
Father explains.

Mother places Ji-Sung a few feet away from a low
table. He stares at a length of string, paintbrush,
dollar bill, pencil, book and bowl of rice.

"Come on, Ji-Sung!" I call to him. "Pick something
from the table!"

He turns and starts to crawl toward me. "No, no!" I
say, pointing at the table. "That way!" Everyone
laughs.

Ji-Sung stops and looks in front of him. Suddenly he
crawls forward and grabs the pencil. "He's going to
be a writer!" someone calls out.

Then Ji-Sung pokes his finger in the rice bowl. "Well,
he'll never be hungry," says Mother.

Finally, he grabs the string, pulling it apart. "Oh
good!" Father says. "He is going to live a long life."

"Yay!" The guests all clap their hands. Ji-Sung grins and claps too.

"What did I pick at my doljabi?" I ask Mother.

"You picked the book," Mother says.

"That means I'll be smart!" I say.

"You are already smart," says Mother. "According to Korean custom, it means you will be a scholar.."

"What's a 'scholar'?" I ask.

Mother smiles. "Someone who likes to learn."

I nod, thinking about how I love books.

I look at Ji-Sung scribbling happily with his pencil.

"Guess what?" I say to Mother. "Our fortunes are already coming true!"