

RISING GENERATIONS

THE UPPER ROOM

A Peace of Pizza

Jacqueline Boulter

“Eric, I read in your class notes that student council elections are Wednesday,” said Mom. “Didn’t you say you wanted to run?”

“Yeah, but not anymore.”

“Why?”

It was true that I was interested in running for student council, but that was before. Before Alex Davis, the biggest bully in the entire fifth grade, decided to run.

No one stands a chance against Alex, but not because he has so many friends. As far as I can tell, he doesn’t have any. But in return for votes, he promised longer recess, more parties, and not to steal our snacks anymore.

It was too hard to explain all that to Mom, so I just said I had changed my mind and went off to do my homework.

Alex and I have been in the same class since kindergarten. Every year he’s gotten better at being a bully. He’s pretty much perfected it by now.

He makes fun of Charlie for having a ton of freckles, Greg for his haircut, and Adrienne for stuttering. If he’s thirsty, he shoves aside whoever’s in line at the water fountain. If he wants something someone else has, he takes it.

It doesn’t seem to bother Alex when teachers catch him in his random acts of unkindness. He spends recess indoors, drawing scary-looking cartoon characters.

I really try to see good in everyone. But Alex makes that hard! Once, after he made Adrienne cry, I told him to knock it off. He laughed and asked, “Who made you the peacemaker?”

God wants me to try, I thought. But the words stayed in my mouth.

Mom brought the student-council thing up again at dinner. “It’s your decision, but it would be good for you to try it,” she said as she passed the spaghetti and meatballs.

“Okay, Mom. I’ll think about it,” I said, stabbing a meatball.

I prayed about it that night. *God, please give me guidance about running for student council. I need an idea that will make a difference.*

At lunch the next day, Alex grabbed Greg’s pretzels and Adrienne’s apple. Then he reached for my slice of pizza.

“You took the cheese off!” he said.

Please God, give me the courage to stand up to him, I thought.

“That’s how I like it,” I said, looking him in the eye. “If you share the slice with me instead of taking it, you can have the cheese or some of the crust.”

He looked at me with bulging eyes and a red face, like one of his cartoon drawings.

“I take what I want,” said Alex, stuffing the cheese in his mouth.

I decided then and there, as I ate my no-cheese pizza, to run for student council.

After school, I got out the poster board and construction paper we keep at home and got to work on my campaign poster.

During our family prayer time that night I told my family that I had decided to run. I asked them to pray with me that I could deliver my message without being too nervous.

At ten o’clock Wednesday morning, it was time for our speeches to the class. Mrs. Alvarez flipped a coin, and Alex went first.

Alex put on a blue-and-white-striped vest, a white beard and wig, and a red, white, and blue top hat. He walked to the front of the room.

“Uncle Alex needs your vote,” he said. “I’ll get you guys extra recess and really cool class parties.”

Then he pulled a poster out and held it up. Alex’s face stared back at us in place of Uncle Sam’s on the poster, pointed finger and all. Everyone laughed. Alex bowed and waved his top hat.

We all clapped. Then all eyes turned to me. I could feel my heart pounding in my ears.

Please, God, help me to do this well.

I taped my giant pizza poster to the whiteboard and wrote my slogan around the top arch, *Let’s All Share a Peace of Pizza.*

“I think our class is like a giant pizza,” I began. “I’ve created twenty-six slices—one for each of us, all with different toppings or even no toppings. My favorite is chicken and pineapple. I know some of us like pepperoni; some like veggies; and others like plain cheese.

“We’re all different—in what we like, the way we look, what we’re good at. But the way I see it, we fit together like a pizza. Each slice touches the next, and it’s okay.

“If I’m elected, I’d like to have a Peace of Pizza party in every classroom, to encourage us to get along even though we’re different,” I said. “So, if you like pepperoni, or even if you don’t, vote for everyone sharing a Peace of Pizza.”

After we voted, Mrs. Alvarez thanked Alex and me for our speeches. “Both of you did a good job. Eric will be our student council representative this year.”

I closed my eyes for a second. “Thank you, God,” I whispered. When I opened them, I saw Alex glaring at me.

I went over to him and held out my hand. He kept his arms crossed. “You gave a good speech,” I said. “The Uncle Sam thing was funny.” Nothing. “So, um, I was thinking maybe you could help me with the Peace of

Pizza parties, since you had the idea about more parties and all.”

He looked at me suspiciously. “I could really use your help,” I said.

Finally he said, “I’ll take the slice with the buffalo chicken, right next to the chicken and pineapple. And maybe I’ll let you keep the crust.”

“Maybe I’ll trade you my crust for some buffalo chicken pieces,” I said.

I don’t really know why Alex acts the way he does or if I can change anything by being nice to him. But I’m going to ask God to help me keep trying!