

The Playground After School

The playground behind our school turns into a different world once the final bell rings. The sun hangs low over the swings, covering the ground in long yellow stripes that look warm even when the air feels cool. Kids rush toward the slide, and their sneakers tap against the metal steps with a sharp clack that echoes across the yard. The smell of freshly cut grass mixes with the dusty scent of the basketball court, creating something familiar that makes me want to stay a little longer.

I always walk straight to the old wooden bench near the fence. Its surface is rough in some places and smooth in others, as if hundreds of students shaped it over the years without noticing. From that spot, I can hear the steady squeak of the swings and the gentle thud of the ball on the court. The sounds blend together in a way that feels calm, even though everything around me is moving fast. When the wind picks up, it carries bits of laughter across the yard like small sparks.

By the time the sky shifts from gold to soft pink, most people have already gone home. The playground becomes quiet, and the empty swings sway on their own. I like that moment best because it feels like the whole place is breathing out after a long day. The shadows grow taller, the air cools, and the world slows down just enough for me to enjoy the last minutes before I head home, too.