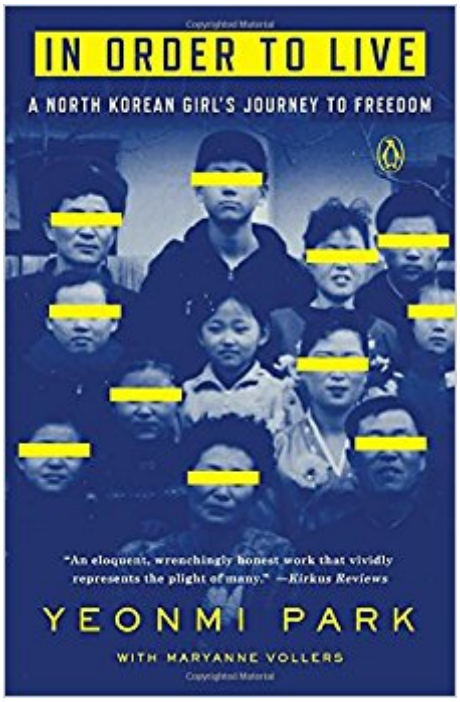
Ebook Directory
the best source of ebook

The book was found

In Order To Live: A North Korean Girl's Journey To Freedom



PDF
Adobe
DOWNLOAD EBOOK

Synopsis

Yeonmi Park has told the harrowing story of her escape from North Korea as a child many times, but never before has she revealed the most intimate and devastating details of the repressive society she was raised in and the enormous price she paid to escape. ParkÃ¢ ¬â„¢s family was loving and close-knit, but life in North Korea was brutal, practically medieval. Park would regularly go without food and was made to believe that, Kim Jong Il, the countryÃ¢ ¬â„¢s dictator, could read her mind. After her father was imprisoned and tortured by the regime for trading on the black-market, a risk he took in order to provide for his wife and two young daughters, Yeonmi and her family were branded as criminals and forced to the cruel margins of North Korean society. With thirteen-year-old Park suffering from a botched appendectomy and weighing a mere sixty pounds, she and her mother were smuggled across the border into China.I wasnÃ¢ ¬â„¢t dreaming of freedom when I escaped from North Korea. I didnÃ¢ ¬â„¢t even know what it meant to be free. All I knew was that if my family stayed behind, we would probably dieÃ¢ ¬â •from starvation, from disease, from the inhuman conditions of a prison labor camp. The hunger had become unbearable; I was willing to risk my life for the promise of a bowl of rice. But there was more to our journey than our own survival. My mother and I were searching for my older sister, Eunmi, who had left for China a few days earlier and had not been heard from since. Park knew the journey would be difficult, but could not have imagined the extent of the hardship to come. Those years in China cost Park her childhood, and nearly her life. Ã Â By the time she and her mother made their way to South Korea two years later, her father was dead and her sister was still missing. Before now, only her mother knew what really happened between the time they crossed the Yalu river into China and when they followed the stars through the frigid Gobi Desert to freedom. As she writes, Ã¢ ¬Å“I convinced myself that a lot of what I had experienced never happened. I taught myself to forget the rest.Ã¢ ¬Â• In In Order to Live, Park shines a light not just into the darkest corners of life in North Korea, describing the deprivation and deception she endured and which millions of North Korean people continue to endure to this day, but also onto her own most painful and difficult memories. She tells with bravery and dignity for the first time the story of how she and her mother were betrayed and sold into sexual slavery in China and forced to suffer terrible psychological and physical hardship before they finally made their way to Seoul, South KoreaÃ¢ ¬â •and to freedom. Still in her early twenties, Yeonmi Park has lived through experiences that few people of any age will ever knowÃ¢ ¬â •and most people would never recover from. Park confronts her past with a startling resilience, refusing to be defeated or defined by the circumstances of her former life in North Korea and China. In spite of everything, she has never stopped being proud of where she is

from, and never stopped striving for a better life. Indeed, today she is a human rights activist working determinedly to bring attention to the oppression taking place in her home country. ParkÃ¢â ¬â„¢s testimony is rare, edifying, and terribly important, and the story she tells in In Order to Live is heartbreaking and unimaginable, but never without hope. Her voice is riveting and dignified. This is the human spirit at its most indomitable.

Book Information

Paperback: 288 pages

Publisher: Penguin Books; Reprint edition (September 27, 2016)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 014310974X

ISBN-13: 978-0143109747

Product Dimensions: 5.5 x 0.8 x 8.4 inches

Shipping Weight: 10.4 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.7 out of 5 stars 538 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #14,544 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #10 inÃ Â Books > History > Asia > Korea > North #16 inÃ Â Books > Biographies & Memoirs > Historical > Asia #54 inÃ Â Books > History > World > Women in History

Customer Reviews

Yeonmi Park is a human rights activist who was born in North Korea.

Visit http://bit.ly/1KfF28h for a larger version of this map.Ã Â PrologueOn the cold, black night of March 31, 2007, my mother and I scrambled down the steep, rocky bank of the frozen Yalu River that divides North Korea and China. There were patrols above us and below, and guard posts one hundred yards on either side of us manned by soldiers ready to shoot anyone attempting to cross the border. We had no idea what would come next, but we were desperate to get to China, where there might be a chance to survive.I was thirteen years old and weighed only sixty pounds. Just a week earlier, IÃ¢â ¬â„¢d been in a hospital in my hometown of Hyesan along the Chinese border, suffering from a severe intestinal infection that the doctors had mistakenly diagnosed as appendicitis. I was still in terrible pain from the incision, and was so weak I could barely walk.The young North Korean smuggler who was guiding us across the border insisted we had to go that night. He had paid some guards to look the other way, but he couldnÃ¢â ¬â„¢t bribe all the soldiers in the area, so we had to be extremely cautious. I followed him in the darkness, but I was so

unsteady that I had to scoot down the bank on my bottom, sending small avalanches of rocks crashing ahead of me. He turned and whispered angrily for me to stop making so much noise. But it was too late. We could see the silhouette of a North Korean soldier climbing up from the riverbed. If this was one of the bribed border guards, he didnÃ¢â ¬â„¢t seem to recognize us.Ã¢â ¬Å“Go back!Ã¢â ¬Â• the soldier shouted. Ã¢â ¬Å“Get out of here!Ã¢â ¬Â•Our guide scrambled down to meet him and we could hear them talking in hushed voices. Our guide returned alone.Ã¢â ¬Å“LetÃ¢â ¬â„¢s go,Ã¢â ¬Â• he said. Ã¢â ¬Å“Hurry!Ã¢â ¬Â•It was early spring, and the weather was getting warmer, melting patches of the frozen river. The place where we crossed was steep and narrow, protected from the sun during the day so it was still solid enough to hold our weightÃ¢â ¬â •we hoped. Our guide made a cell phone call to someone on the other side, the Chinese side, and then whispered, Ã¢â ¬Å“Run!Ã¢â ¬Â•The guide started running, but my feet would not move and I clung to my mother. I was so scared that I was completely paralyzed. The guide ran back for us, grabbed my hands, and dragged me across the ice. When we reached solid ground, we started running and didnÃ¢â ¬â„¢t stop until we were out of sight of the border guards.The riverbank was dark, but the lights of Chaingbai, China, glowed just ahead of us. I turned to take a quick glance back at the place where I was born. The electric power grid was down, as usual, and all I could see was a black, lifeless horizon. I felt my heart pounding out of my chest as we arrived at a small shack on the edge of some flat, vacant fields.I wasnÃ¢â ¬â„¢t dreaming of freedom when I escaped from North Korea. I didnÃ¢â ¬â„¢t even know what it meant to be free. All I knew was that if my family stayed behind, we would probably dieÃ¢â ¬â •from starvation, from disease, from the inhuman conditions of a prison labor camp. The hunger had become unbearable; I was willing to risk my life for the promise of a bowl of rice.But there was more to our journey than our own survival. My mother and I were searching for my older sister, Eunmi, who had left for China a few days earlier and had not been heard from since. We hoped that she would be there waiting for us when we crossed the river. Instead the only person to greet us was a bald, middle-aged Chinese man, an ethnic North Korean like many of the people living in this border area. The man said something to my mother, and then led her around the side of the building. From where I waited I could hear my mother pleading, Ã¢â ¬Å“Aniyo! Aniyo!Ã¢â ¬Â• No! No!I knew then that something was terribly wrong. We had come to a bad place, maybe even worse than the one we had left.Ã¢â ¬Â¢Ã Â Ã Â Ã Â Ã¢â ¬Â¢Ã Â Ã Â Ã Â Ã¢â ¬Â¢I am most grateful for two things: that I was born in North Korea, and that I escaped from North Korea. Both of these events shaped me, and I would not trade them for an ordinary and peaceful life. But there is more to the story of how I became who I am today.Like tens of thousands of other North Koreans, I escaped my homeland

and settled in South Korea, where we are still considered citizens, as if a sealed border and nearly seventy years of conflict and tension never divided us. North and South Koreans have the same ethnic backgrounds, and we speak the same languageÃ¢â ¬â •except in the North there are no words for things like Ã¢â ¬Å“shopping malls,Ã¢â ¬Â• Ã¢â ¬Å“liberty,Ã¢â ¬Â• or even Ã¢â ¬Å“love,Ã¢â ¬Â• at least as the rest of the world knows it. The only true Ã¢â ¬Å“loveÃ¢â ¬Â• we can express is worship for the Kims, a dynasty of dictators who have ruled North Korea for three generations. The regime blocks all outside information, all videos and movies, and jams radio signals. There is no World Wide Web and no Wikipedia. The only books are filled with propaganda telling us that we live in the greatest country in the world, even though at least half of North Koreans live in extreme poverty and many are chronically malnourished. My former country doesnÃ¢â ¬â„¢t even call itself North KoreaÃ¢â ¬â •it claims to be Chosun, the true Korea, a perfect socialist paradise where 25 million people live only to serve the Supreme Leader, Kim Jong Un. Many of us who have escaped call ourselves Ã¢â ¬Å“defectorsÃ¢â ¬Â• because by refusing to accept our fate and die for the Leader, we have deserted our duty. The regime calls us traitors. If I tried to return, I would be executed.The information blockade works both ways: not only does the government attempt to keep all foreign media from reaching its people, it also prevents outsiders from learning the truth about North Korea. The regime is known as the Hermit Kingdom because it tries to make itself unknowable. Only those of us who have escaped can describe what really goes on behind the sealed borders. But until recently, our stories were seldom heard.I arrived in South Korea in the spring of 2009, a fifteen-year-old with no money and the equivalent of two years of primary school. Five years later, I was a sophomore at a top university in Seoul, a police administration major with a growing awareness of the burning need for justice in the land where I was born.I have told the story of my escape from North Korea many times, in many forums. I have described how human traffickers tricked my mother and me into following them to China, where my mother protected me and sacrificed herself to be raped by the broker who had targeted me. Once in China, we continued to look for my sister, without success. My father crossed the border to join us in our search, but he died of untreated cancer a few months later. In 2009, my mother and I were rescued by Christian missionaries, who led us to the Mongolian border with China. From there we walked through the frigid Gobi Desert one endless winter night, following the stars to freedom.All this is true, but it is not the whole story.Before now, only my mother knew what really happened in the two years that passed between the night we crossed the Yalu River into China and the day we arrived in South Korea to begin a new life. I told almost nothing of my story to the other defectors and human rights advocates I met in South Korea. I believed that, somehow, if I refused to acknowledge the

unspeakable past, it would disappear. I convinced myself that a lot of it never happened; I taught myself to forget the rest.But as I began to write this book, I realized that without the whole truth my life would have no power, no real meaning. With the help of my mother, the memories of our lives in North Korea and China came back to me like scenes from a forgotten nightmare. Some of the images reappeared with a terrible clarity; others were hazy, or scrambled like a deck of cards spilled on the floor. The process of writing has been the process of remembering, and of trying to make sense out of those memories.Along with writing, reading has helped me order my world. As soon as I arrived in South Korea and could get my hands on translations of the worldÃ¢â ¬â„¢s great books, I began devouring them. Later I was able to read them in English. And as I began to write my own book, I came across a famous line by Joan Didion, Ã¢â ¬Å“We tell ourselves stories in order to live.Ã¢â ¬Â• Even though the writer and I come from such different cultures, I feel the truth of those words echoing inside me. I understand that sometimes the only way we can survive our own memories is to shape them into a story that makes sense out of events that seem inexplicable.Along my journey I have seen the horrors that humans can inflict on one another, but IÃ¢â ¬â„¢ve also witnessed acts of tenderness and kindness and sacrifice in the worst imaginable circumstances. I know that it is possible to lose part of your humanity in order to survive. But I also know that the spark of human dignity is never completely extinguished, and that given the oxygen of freedom and the power of love, it can grow again.This is my story of the choices I made in order to live.PART ONENorth KoreaOneEven the Birds and Mice Can Hear You WhisperThe Yalu River winds like the tail of a dragon between China and North Korea on its way to the Yellow Sea. At Hyesan it opens into a valley in the Paektu Mountains, where the city of 200,000 sprawls between rolling hills and a high plateau covered with fields, patches of trees, and graves. The river, usually shallow and tame, is frozen solid during winter, which lasts the better part of the year. This is the coldest part of North Korea, with temperatures sometimes plunging to minus-40 degrees Fahrenheit. Only the toughest survive.To me, Hyesan was home.Just across the river is the Chinese city of Chaingbai, which has a large population of ethnic Koreans. Families on both sides of the border have been trading with one another for generations. As a child I would often stand in the darkness and stare across the river at the lights of Chaingbai, wondering what was going on beyond my cityÃ¢â ¬â„¢s limits. It was exciting to watch the colorful fireworks explode in the velvet black sky during festivals and Chinese New Year. We never had such things on our side of the border. Sometimes, when I walked down to the river to fill my buckets with water and the damp wind was blowing just right, I could actually smell delicious food, oily noodles and dumplings cooking in the kitchens on the other side. The same wind carried the voices of the Chinese children who were

playing on the opposite bank.Ã¢â ¬Å“Hey, you! Are you hungry over there?Ã¢â ¬Â• the boys shouted in Korean.Ã¢â ¬Å“No! Shut up, you fat Chinese!Ã¢â ¬Â• I shouted back.This wasnÃ¢â ¬â„¢t true. In fact, I was very hungry, but there was no use in talking about it.Ã¢â ¬Â¢Ã Â Ã Â Ã Â Ã¢â ¬Â¢Ã Â Ã Â Ã Â Ã¢â ¬Â¢I came into this world too soon.My mother was only seven months pregnant when she went into labor, and when I was born on October 4, 1993, I weighed less than three pounds. The doctor at the hospital in Hyesan told my mother that I was so small there wasnÃ¢â ¬â„¢t anything they could do for me. Ã¢â ¬Å“She might live or she might die,Ã¢â ¬Â• he said. Ã¢â ¬Å“We donÃ¢â ¬â„¢t know.Ã¢â ¬Â• It was up to me to live.No matter how many blankets my mother wrapped around me, she couldnÃ¢â ¬â„¢t keep me warm. So she heated up a stone and put it in the blanket with me, and thatÃ¢â ¬â„¢s how I survived. A few days later, my parents brought me home, and waited.My sister, Eunmi, had been born two years earlier, and this time my father, Park Jin Sik, was hoping for a son. In patriarchal North Korea, it was the male line that really mattered. However, he quickly recovered from his disappointment. Most of the time itÃ¢â ¬â„¢s the mother who makes the strongest bond with a baby, but my father was the one who could soothe me when I was crying. It was in my fatherÃ¢â ¬â„¢s arms that I felt protected and cherished. Both my mother and my father encouraged me, from the start, to be proud of who I am.Ã¢â ¬Â¢Ã Â Ã Â Ã Â Ã¢â ¬Â¢Ã Â Ã Â Ã Â Ã¢â ¬Â¢When I was very young, we lived in a one-story house perched on a hill above the railroad tracks that curved like a rusty spine through the city.Our house was small and drafty, and because we shared a wall with a neighbor we could always hear what was going on next door. We could also hear mice squeaking and skittering around in the ceiling at night. But it was paradise to me because we were there together as a family.My first memories are of the dark and the cold. During the winter months, the most popular place in our house was a small fireplace that burned wood or coal or whatever we could find. We cooked on top of the fire, and there were channels running under the cement floor to carry the smoke to a wooden chimney on the other side of the house. This traditional heating system was supposed to keep the room warm, but it was no match for the icy nights. At the end of the day, my mother would spread a thick blanket out next to the fire and we would all climb under the coversÃ¢â ¬â •first my mother, then me, then my sister, and my father on the end, in the coldest spot. Once the sun went down, you couldnÃ¢â ¬â„¢t see anything at all. In our part of North Korea, it was normal to go for weeks and even months without any electricity, and candles were very expensive. So we played games in the dark. Sometimes under the covers we would tease each other.Ã¢â ¬Å“Whose foot is this?Ã¢â ¬Â• my mother would say, poking with her toe.Ã¢â ¬Å“ItÃ¢â ¬â„¢s mine, itÃ¢â ¬â„¢s mine!Ã¢â ¬Â• Eunmi would cry.On winter evenings and

mornings, and even in summertime, everywhere we looked we could see smoke coming from the chimneys of Hyesan. Our neighborhood was very cozy and small, and we knew everyone who lived there. If smoke was not coming out of someoneÃ¢â ¬â„¢s house, weÃ¢â ¬â„¢d go knock on the door to check if everything was okay.The unpaved lanes between houses were too narrow for cars, although this wasnÃ¢â ¬â„¢t much of a problem because there were so few cars. People in our neighborhood got around on foot, or for the few who could afford one, on bicycle or motorbike. The paths would turn slippery with mud after a rain, and that was the best time for the neighborhood kids to play our favorite chasing game. But I was smaller and slower than the other children my age and always had a hard time fitting in and keeping up.When I started school, Eunmi sometimes had to fight the older kids to defend me. She wasnÃ¢â ¬â„¢t very big, either, but she was smart and quick. She was my protector and playmate. When it snowed, she carried me up the hills around our neighborhood, put me in her lap, and wrapped her arms around me. I held on tight as we slid back down on our bottoms, screaming and laughing. I was just happy to be part of her world.In the summer, all the kids went down to play in the Yalu River, but I never learned how to swim. I just sat on the bank while the others paddled out into the current. Sometimes my sister or my best friend, Yong Ja, would see me by myself and bring me some pretty rocks theyÃ¢â ¬â„¢d found in the deep river. And sometimes they held me in their arms and carried me a little way into the water before bringing me back to shore.Yong Ja and I were the same age, and we lived in the same part of town. I liked her because we were both good at using our imaginations to create our own toys. You could find a few manufactured dolls and other toys in the market, but they were usually too expensive. Instead we made little bowls and animals out of mud, and sometimes even miniature tanks; homemade military toys were very big in North Korea. But we girls were obsessed with paper dolls and spent hours cutting them out of thick paper, making dresses and scarves for them out of scraps.Sometimes my mother made pinwheels for us, and we would fasten them on to the metal footbridge above the railroad we called the Cloud Bridge. Years later, when life was much harder and more complicated, I would pass by that bridge and think of how happy it made us to watch those pinwheels spin in the open
breeze.Ã¢â ¬Â¢Ã Â Ã Â Ã Â Ã¢â ¬Â¢Ã Â Ã Â Ã Â Ã¢â ¬Â¢When I was young, I didnÃ¢â ¬â„¢t hear the background noise of mechanical sounds like I do now in South Korea and the United States. There werenÃ¢â ¬â„¢t garbage trucks churning, horns honking, or phones ringing everywhere. All I could hear were the sounds people were making: women washing dishes, mothers calling their children, the clink of spoons and chopsticks on rice bowls as families sat down to eat. Sometimes I could hear my friends being scolded by their parents. There was no music blaring in

the background, no eyes glued to smartphones back then. But there was human intimacy and connection, something that is hard to find in the modern world I inhabit today.At our house in Hyesan, our water pipes were almost always dry, so my mother usually carried our clothes down to the river and washed them there. When she brought them back, she put them on the warm floor to dry.Because electricity was so rare in our neighborhood, whenever the lights came on people were so happy they would sing and clap and shout. Even in the middle of the night, we would wake up to celebrate. When you have so little, just the smallest thing can make you happyÃ¢â ¬â •and that is one of the very few features of life in North Korea that I actually miss. Of course, the lights would never stay on for long. When they flickered off, we just said, Ã¢â ¬Å“Oh, well,Ã¢â ¬Â• and went back to sleep.Even when the electricity came on the power was very low, so many families had a voltage booster to help run the appliances. These machines were always catching on fire, and one March night it happened at our house while my parents were out. I was just a baby, and all I remember is waking up and crying while someone carried me through the smoke and flames. I donÃ¢â ¬â„¢t know if it was my sister or our neighbor who saved me. My mother came running when someone told her about the blaze, but my sister and I were both already safe in the neighborÃ¢â ¬â„¢s house. Our home was destroyed by the fire, but right away my father rebuilt it with his own hands.After that, we planted a garden in our small fenced yard. My mother and sister werenÃ¢â ¬â„¢t interested in gardening, but my father and I loved it. We put in squash and cabbage and cucumbers and sunflowers. My father also planted beautiful fuchsia flowers we called Ã¢â ¬Å“ear dropsÃ¢â ¬Â• along the fence. I adored draping the long delicate blossoms from my ears and pretending they were earrings. My mother asked my father why he was wasting valuable space planting flowers, but he ignored her.In North Korea, people lived close to nature, and they developed skills to predict the next dayÃ¢â ¬â„¢s weather. We didnÃ¢â ¬â„¢t have the Internet and usually couldnÃ¢â ¬â„¢t watch the governmentÃ¢â ¬â„¢s broadcast on television because of the electricity shortage. So we had to figure it out ourselves.During the long summer nights, our neighbors would all sit around outside their houses in the evening air. There were no chairs; we just sat on the ground, looking at the sky. If we saw millions of stars up there, someone would remark, Ã¢â ¬Å“Tomorrow will be a sunny day.Ã¢â ¬Â• And weÃ¢â ¬â„¢d all murmur agreement. If there were only thousands of stars, someone else might say, Ã¢â ¬Å“Looks like tomorrow will be cloudy.Ã¢â ¬Â• That was our local forecast.The best day of every month was Noodle Day, when my mother bought fresh, moist noodles that were made in a machine in town. We wanted them to last a long time, so we spread them out on the warm kitchen floor to dry. It was like a holiday for my sister and me because we would get to sneak a few noodles and eat them while they were still soft and

sweet. In the earliest years of my life, before the worst of the famine that struck North Korea in the mid-1990s had gripped our city, our friends would come around and we would share the noodles with them. In North Korea, you are supposed to share everything. But later, when times were much harder for our family and for the country, my mother told us to chase the children away. We couldnÃ¢â ¬â„¢t afford to share anything.During the good times, a family meal would consist of rice, kimchi, some kind of beans, and seaweed soup. But those things were too expensive to eat during the lean times. Sometimes we would skip meals, and often all we had to eat was a thin porridge of wheat or barley, beans, or black frozen potatoes ground and made into cakes filled with cabbage.Ã¢â ¬Â¢Ã Â Ã Â Ã Â Ã¢â ¬Â¢Ã Â Ã Â Ã Â Ã¢â ¬Â¢The country I grew up in was not like the one my parents had known as children in the 1960s and 1970s. When they were young, the state took care of everyoneÃ¢â ¬â„¢s basic needs: clothes, medical care, food. After the Cold War ended, the Communist countries that had been propping up the North Korean regime all but abandoned it, and our state-controlled economy collapsed. North Koreans were suddenly on their own.I was too young to realize how desperate things were becoming in the grown-up world, as my family tried to adapt to the massive changes in North Korea during the 1990s. After my sister and I were asleep, my parents would sometimes lie awake, sick with worry, wondering what they could do to keep us all from starving to death.Anything I did overhear, I learned quickly not to repeat. I was taught never to express my opinion, never to question anything. I was taught to simply follow what the government told me to do or say or think. I actually believed that our Dear Leader, Kim Jong Il, could read my mind, and I would be punished for my bad thoughts. And if he didnÃ¢â ¬â„¢t hear me, spies were everywhere, listening at the windows and watching in the school yard. We all belonged to inminban, or neighborhood Ã¢â ¬Å“peopleÃ¢â ¬â„¢s units,Ã¢â ¬Â• and we were ordered to inform on anyone who said the wrong thing. We lived in fear, and almost everyoneÃ¢â ¬â •my mother includedÃ¢â ¬â •had a personal experience that demonstrated the dangers of talking.I was only nine months old when Kim Il Sung died on July 8, 1994. North Koreans worshipped the eighty-two-year-old Ã¢â ¬Å“Great Leader.Ã¢â ¬Â• At the time of his death, Kim Il Sung had ruled North Korea with an iron grip for almost five decades, and true believersÃ¢â ¬â •my mother includedÃ¢â ¬â •thought that Kim Il Sung was actually immortal. His passing was a time of passionate mourning, and also uncertainty in the country. The Great LeaderÃ¢â ¬â„¢s son, Kim Jong Il, had already been chosen to succeed his father, but the huge void Kim Il Sung left behind had everyone on edge.My mother strapped me on her back to join the thousands of mourners who daily flocked to the plaza-like Kim Il Sung monument in Hyesan to weep and wail for the fallen Leader during the official mourning period. The mourners left offerings of flowers and cups of rice

liquor to show their adoration and grief.During that time, one of my fatherÃ¢â ¬â„¢s relatives was visiting from northeast China, where many ethnic North Koreans lived. Because he was a foreigner, he was not as reverent about the Great Leader, and when my mother came back from one of her trips to the monument, Uncle Yong Soo repeated a story he had just heard. The Pyongyang government had announced that Kim Il Sung had died of a heart attack, but Yong Soo reported that a Chinese friend told him he had heard from a North Korean police officer that it wasnÃ¢â ¬â„¢t true. The real cause of death, he said, was hwa-byungÃ¢â ¬â •a common diagnosis in both North and South Korea that roughly translates into Ã¢â ¬Å“disease caused by mental or emotional stress.Ã¢â ¬Â• Yong Soo had heard that there were disagreements between Kim Il Sung and Kim Jong Il over the elder KimÃ¢â ¬â„¢s plans to hold talks with South Korea.Ã Â .Ã Â .Ã Â .Ã¢â ¬Å“Stop!Ã¢â ¬Â• my mother said. Ã¢â ¬Å“DonÃ¢â ¬â„¢t say another word!Ã¢â ¬Â• She was so upset that Yong Soo would dare to spread rumors about the regime that she had to be rude to her guest and shut him up.The next day she and her best friend were visiting the monument to place more flowers when they noticed someone had vandalized the offerings.Ã¢â ¬Å“Oh, there are such bad people in this world!Ã¢â ¬Â• her friend said.Ã¢â ¬Å“You are so right!Ã¢â ¬Â• my mother said. Ã¢â ¬Å“You wouldnÃ¢â ¬â„¢t believe the evil rumor that our enemies have been spreading.Ã¢â ¬Â• And then she told her friend about the lies she had heard.The following day she was walking across the Cloud Bridge when she noticed an official-looking car parked in the lane below our house, and a large group of men gathered around it. She immediately knew something awful was about to happen.The visitors were plainclothes agents of the dreaded bo-wi-bu, or National Security Agency, that ran the political prison camps and investigated threats to the regime. Everybody knew these men could take you away and you would never be heard from again. Worse, these werenÃ¢â ¬â„¢t locals; they had been sent from headquarters.The senior agent met my mother at our door and led her to our neighborÃ¢â ¬â„¢s house, which he had borrowed for the afternoon. They both sat, and he looked at her with eyes like black glass.Ã¢â ¬Å“Do you know why IÃ¢â ¬â„¢m here?Ã¢â ¬Â• he asked.Ã¢â ¬Å“Yes, I do,Ã¢â ¬Â• she said.Ã¢â ¬Å“So where did you hear that?Ã¢â ¬Â• he said.She told him sheÃ¢â ¬â„¢d heard the rumor from her husbandÃ¢â ¬â„¢s Chinese uncle, who had heard it from a friend.Ã¢â ¬Å“What do you think of it?Ã¢â ¬Â• he said.Ã¢â ¬Å“ItÃ¢â ¬â„¢s a terrible, evil rumor!Ã¢â ¬Â• she said, most sincerely. Ã¢â ¬Å“ItÃ¢â ¬â„¢s a lie told by our enemies who are trying to destroy the greatest nation in the world!Ã¢â ¬Â•Ã¢â ¬Å“What do you think you have done wrong?Ã¢â ¬Â• he said, flatly.Ã¢â ¬Å“Sir, I should have gone to the party organization to report it. I was wrong to just tell it to an individual.Ã¢â ¬Â•Ã¢â ¬Å“No, you are wrong,Ã¢â ¬Â• he said.

Ã¢â ¬Å“You should never have let those words out of your mouth.Ã¢â ¬Â•Now she was sure she was going to die. She kept telling him she was sorry, begging to spare her life for the sake of her two babies. As we say in Korea, she begged until she thought her hands would wear off.Finally, he said in a sharp voice that chilled her bones, Ã¢â ¬Å“You must never mention this again. Not to your friends or your husband or your children. Do you understand what will happen if you do?Ã¢â ¬Â•She did. Completely.Next he interrogated Uncle Yong Soo, who was nervously waiting with the family at our house. My mother thinks that she was spared any punishment because Yong Soo confirmed to the agent how angry she had been when he told her the rumor.When it was over, the agents rode away in their car. My uncle went back to China. When my father asked my mother what the secret police wanted from her, she said it was nothing she could talk about, and never mentioned it again. My father went to his grave without knowing how close they had come to disaster.Many years later, after she told me her story, I finally understood why when my mother sent me off to school she never said, Ã¢â ¬Å“Have a good day,Ã¢â ¬Â• or even, Ã¢â ¬Å“Watch out for strangers.Ã¢â ¬Â• What she always said was, Ã¢â ¬Å“Take care of your mouth.Ã¢â ¬Â•In most countries, a mother encourages her children to ask about everything, but not in North Korea. As soon as I was old enough to understand, my mother warned me that I should be careful about what I was saying. Ã¢â ¬Å“Remember, Yeonmi-ya,Ã¢â ¬Â• she said gently, Ã¢â ¬Å“even when you think youÃ¢â ¬â„¢re alone, the birds and mice can hear you whisper.Ã¢â ¬Â• She didnÃ¢â ¬â„¢t mean to scare me, but I felt a deep darkness and horror inside me.TwoA Dangerous HistoryI think my father would have become a millionaire if he had grown up in South Korea or the United States. But he was born in North Korea, where family connections and party loyalty are all that matter, and hard work guarantees you nothing but more hard work and a constant struggle to survive.Park Jin Sik was born in the industrial port city of Hamhung on March 4, 1962, into a military family with good political connections. This should have given him a great advantage in life, because in North Korea all of your opportunities are determined by your caste, or songbun. When Kim Il Sung came to power after World War II, he upended the traditional feudal system that divided the people into landlords and peasants, nobility and commoners, priests and scholars. He ordered background checks on every citizen to find out everything about them and their families, going back generations. In the songbun system, everyone is ranked among three main groups, based on their supposed loyalty to the regime.The highest is the Ã¢â ¬Å“coreÃ¢â ¬Â• class made up of honored revolutionariesÃ¢â ¬â •peasants, veterans, or relatives of those who fought or died for the NorthÃ¢â ¬â •and those who have demonstrated great loyalty to the Kim family and are part of the apparatus that keeps them in power. Second is the Ã¢â ¬Å“basicÃ¢â ¬Â• or

Ã¢â ¬Å“waveringÃ¢â ¬Â• class, made up of those who once lived in the South or had family there, former merchants, intellectuals, or any ordinary person who might not be trusted to have complete loyalty to the new order. Finally, lowest of all, is the Ã¢â ¬Å“hostileÃ¢â ¬Â• class, including former landowners and their descendants, capitalists, former South Korean soldiers, Christians or other religious followers, the families of political prisoners, and any other perceived enemies of the state.It is extremely difficult to move to a higher songbun, but it is very easy to be cast down into the lowest levels through no fault of your own. And as my father and his family found out, once you lose your songbun status, you lose everything else you have achieved along with it.Ã¢â ¬Â¢Ã Â Ã Â Ã Â Ã¢â ¬Â¢Ã Â Ã Â Ã Â Ã¢â ¬Â¢My fatherÃ¢â ¬â„¢s father, Park Chang Gyu, grew up in the countryside near Hyesan when Korea was a Japanese colony.For more than four thousand years there has been one Korean people, but many different Koreas. Legend tells us that our history began in 2333 B.C., with a kingdom called Chosun, which means Ã¢â ¬Å“Morning Land.Ã¢â ¬Â• Despite its soothing name, my homeland has rarely been peaceful. The Korean peninsula lay at the crossroads of great empires, and over the centuries Korean kingdoms had to fight off invaders from Manchuria to Mongolia and beyond. Then, in the early twentieth century, the expanding Japanese empire slowly absorbed Korea using threats and treaties, finally annexing the whole country in 1910. That was two years before the birth of North KoreaÃ¢â ¬â„¢s first Leader, Kim Il Sung, and eleven years before my grandfather Park was born.The Japanese were despotic colonial rulers who tried to destroy Korean culture and turn us into second-class citizens in our own land. They outlawed the Korean language and took over our farms and industries. This behavior sparked a nationalist resistance to Japanese rule that was met with violent suppression. Like many Koreans, Kim Il SungÃ¢â ¬â„¢s parents moved the family across the northern border to Manchuria, then a part of the Chinese empire. After the Japanese invaded Manchuria in the early 1930s, our future Great Leader joined a guerrilla group fighting the Japanese occupiers. But at the outset of World War II, Kim Il Sung joined the Soviet army and (as I later learned), contrary to North Korean propaganda, which has him almost singlehandedly defeating the JapaneseÃ¢â ¬â •spent the war at a military base far from the fighting.When I was growing up, we didnÃ¢â ¬â„¢t talk about what our families did during those times. In North Korea, any history can be dangerous. What I know about my fatherÃ¢â ¬â„¢s side of the family comes from the few stories my father told my mother.At the start of World War II, Grandfather Park was working for Japanese managers in the finance department of HyesanÃ¢â ¬â„¢s administrative office, or city hall. It was there that he met his future wife, Jung Hye Soon, who was also working at the city hall. She was an orphan who had been raised by her aunt, and sheÃ¢â ¬â„¢d had a very hard life before she met my grandfather. Their

courtship was unusual, because unlike so many Korean couples whose marriages are arranged by their parents, my grandparents actually knew and liked each other before their wedding.My grandfather kept his civil service job all through World War II. After the Japanese surrendered on August 15, 1945, the Soviet army swept into the northern part of Korea, while the American military took charge of the SouthÃ¢â ¬â •and this set the stage for the agony my country has endured for more than seventy years. An arbitrary line was drawn along the 38th parallel, dividing the peninsula into two administrative zones: North and South Korea. The United States flew an anti-Communist exile named Syngman Rhee into Seoul and ushered him into power as the first president of the Republic of Korea. In the North, Kim Il Sung, who had by then become a Soviet major, was installed as leader of the Democratic PeopleÃ¢â ¬â„¢s Republic of Korea, or DPRK.The Soviets quickly rounded up all eligible men to establish a North Korean military force. My grandfather was taken from his job at city hall and turned into an officer in the PeopleÃ¢â ¬â„¢s Army.By 1949, both the United States and the Soviet Union had withdrawn their troops and turned the peninsula over to the new puppet leaders. It did not go well. Kim Il Sung was a Stalinist and an ultranationalist dictator who decided to reunify the country in the summer of 1950 by invading the South with Russian tanks and thousands of troops. In North Korea, we were taught that the Yankee imperialists started the war, and our soldiers gallantly fought off their evil invasion. In fact, the United States military returned to Korea for the express purpose of defending the SouthÃ¢â ¬â •bolstered by an official United Nations forceÃ¢â ¬â •and quickly drove Kim Il SungÃ¢â ¬â„¢s army all the way to the Yalu River, nearly taking over the country. They were stopped only when Chinese soldiers surged across the border and fought the Americans back to the 38th parallel. By the end of this senseless war, at least three million Koreans had been killed or wounded, millions were refugees, and most of the country was in ruins.In 1953, both sides agreed to end the fighting, but they never signed a peace treaty. To this day we are still officially at war, and both the governments of the North and South believe that they are the legitimate representatives of all Koreans.Ã¢â ¬Â¢Ã Â Ã Â Ã Â Ã¢â ¬Â¢Ã Â Ã Â Ã Â Ã¢â ¬Â¢Grandfather Park was a financial officer and never fired a shot during the Korean War. After the armistice, he remained in the military, traveling with his family from post to post. He was based in Hamhung, about 180 miles south of Hyesan, when my father was bornÃ¢â ¬â •the fourth of five children and the youngest son. Later, when my grandfather retired from active duty, the government resettled him and his family in Hyesan. My grandfatherÃ¢â ¬â„¢s position as an officer and a member of the ruling WorkersÃ¢â ¬â„¢ Party of Korea gave him good songbun status, and he was awarded another job as finance manager at the commissary that supplied goods to military families. At least for a while,

the family prospered along with North KoreaÃ¢â ¬â„¢s growing economy.During the 1950s and 1960s, China and the Soviet Union poured money into North Korea to help it rebuild. The North has coal and minerals in its mountains, and it was always the richer, more industrialized part of the country. It bounced back more quickly than the South, which was still mostly agricultural and slow to recover from the war. But that started to change in the 1970s and 1980s, as South Korea became a manufacturing center and North KoreaÃ¢â ¬â„¢s Soviet-style system began to collapse under its own weight. The economy was centrally planned and completely controlled by the state. There was no private propertyÃ¢â ¬â •at least officiallyÃ¢â ¬â •and all the farms were collectivized, although people could grow some vegetables to sell in small, highly controlled markets. The government provided all jobs, paid everyoneÃ¢â ¬â„¢s salary, and distributed rations for most food and consumer goods.While my parents were growing up, the distribution system was still subsidized by the Soviet Union and China, so few people were starving, but nobody outside the elite really prospered. At the same time, supply wasnÃ¢â ¬â„¢t meeting demand for the kinds of items people wanted, like imported clothing, electronics, and special foods. While the favored classes had access to many of these goods through government-run department stores, the prices were usually too high for most people to afford. Any ordinary citizen who fancied foreign cigarettes or alcohol or Japanese-made handbags would have to buy them on the black market. The usual route for those goods was from the north, through
China.Ã¢â ¬Â¢Ã Â Ã Â Ã Â Ã¢â ¬Â¢Ã Â Ã Â Ã Â Ã¢â ¬Â¢My father went into the military sometime around 1980, when he was in his late teens. Like most North Korean men from the middle and upper classes, he was conscripted for ten years of service, although with connections that could be reduced to as little as two. But less than a year after my father joined the army, he got very sick with a burst appendix. After four or five surgeries to control complications from the infection, his military service was over for good. This could have been a catastrophe for him, because North Korean men without military backgrounds are usually shut out of the best jobs. But when he returned to Hyesan with nothing to do, his father suggested he study finance. He was able to enroll in a three-year program at the Hyesan Economic College. The rest of the family was also doing well. My fatherÃ¢â ¬â„¢s older brother Park Jin was attending medical school in Hyesan, and his eldest brother, Park Dong Il, was a middle school teacher in Hamhung. His older sister had married and moved to Pyongyang where she worked as a waitress, and his little sister was attending school in Hyesan.But disaster struck in 1980 when Dong Il was accused of raping one of his students and attempting to kill his wife. I never learned all the details of what happened, or even if the charges were true, but he ended up being sentenced to twenty years of hard labor. It was only because of

Grandfather ParkÃ¢ ¬â„¢s connections that he escaped execution. It is common for nonpolitical prisoners to be released from prison before they die, to save the government the trouble of sending their bodies home. So after serving twelve years, Dong Il was let out on sick leave and he returned to Hyesan. Nobody in the family ever spoke about his past. I remember him as a frail and quiet man who was always kind to me. He died when I was still a little girl.In North Korea, if one member of the family commits a serious crime, everybody is considered a criminal. Suddenly my fatherÃ¢ ¬â„¢s family lost its favorable social and political status.There are more than fifty subgroups within the main songbun castes, and once you become an adult, your status is constantly being monitored and adjusted by the authorities. A network of casual neighborhood informants and official police surveillance ensures that nothing you do or your family does goes unnoticed. Everything about you is recorded and stored in local administrative offices and in big national organizations, and the information is used to determine where you can live, where you can go to school, and where you can work. With a superior songbun, you can join the WorkersÃ¢ ¬â„¢ Party, which gives you access to political power. You can go to a good university and get a good job. With a poor one, you can end up on a collective farm chopping rice paddies for the rest of your life. And, in times of famine, starving to death.All of Grandfather ParkÃ¢ ¬â„¢s connections could not save his career after his eldest son was convicted of attempted murder. He was fired from his job at the commissary shortly after Dong Il was sent to prison, although no official reason was given for his dismissal. Fortunately, his younger sons were less affected by the scandal and managed to complete their educations. My uncle Park Jin finished medical school and became a professor at Hyesan Medical University and later became administrator at the medical college. He was an excellent student and clever political player who managed to succeed despite his familyÃ¢ ¬â„¢s problems. My father earned his degree in economic planning and, like his father before him, was hired to work in the finance office in HyesanÃ¢ ¬â„¢s city hall. But after only a year, there was a restructuring in the administrative offices and he lost his job. His poor songbun had finally caught up with him.My father realized he would have no future unless he found a way to join the WorkersÃ¢ ¬â„¢ Party. He decided to become a laborer at a local metal foundry where he could work hard and prove his loyalty to the regime. He was able to build good relationships with the people who had power at his workplace, including the party representative there. Before long, he had his membership.By that time, my father had also started a side business to make some extra money. This was a bold move, because any business venture outside of state control was illegal. But my father was unusual in that he had a natural entrepreneurial spirit and what some might call a healthy contempt for rules. He also had the luck to be living at the right time and in the right part of the country to turn his business

into a big success. At least for a while.Hyesan already had a long-established tradition of cross-border trade with China and a small but lively black market for everything from dried fish to electronics. During the 1980s, women were allowed to sell food and handicrafts in makeshift markets, but general trading was still an underground and specialized activity. My father joined a small but growing class of black market operators who found ways to exploit cracks in the state-controlled economy. He started small. My father discovered that he could buy a carton of top-quality cigarettes for 70 to 100 won on the black market in Hyesan, then sell each cigarette for 7 to 10 won in the North Korean interior. At that time, a kilogramÃ¢â ¬â •2.2 poundsÃ¢â ¬â •of rice cost around 25 won, so cigarettes were obviously very valuable.

At university when I was studying modern Chinese history, I always shunned history books with their bare, empty facts and their clinical indifference to what's written inside them. In my opinion. history is best told in stories of the people who live through it, so I did most of my research through autobiographies. I came to this book with the expectation of doing much the same - of reading someone's story and learning more about North Korea and what life is still like for the people living there. What I didn't expect was the level of depth and meaning in the story inside.I watched Ms Park's One Young World speech (and cried along with her), and I was expecting the book to be emotional, and in particular I was looking forward to the parts when she was reunited with her family members. It wasn't emotional - but after I'd finished the book and realised it wasn't, it made perfect sense. We are taken step by step through someone's quest to survive. The lengths she's had to go through, and someone who has been starving for half her life, repeatedly raped, brutalised, lost people dear to her, and seen awful, awful things (hopefully she has managed to overcome her initial indifference to the idea of counselling!), there's too much to cope with to even know where to begin addressing any emotions.It would be disingenuous for the writer to have made this an emotional book; Ms Park hardly had time or energy for emotions. Every moment she was either trying to survive herself or trying to help her family members. There was no excess energy to be used for anything except whatever she needed to do to make it through the obstacles she was facing. And, boy, did she have to do a lot of awful things in order to survive. It takes a special type of strength to be able to be honest about the awful things that have happened to you - in particular being trafficked and raped - and I know deciding to tell that story must have been a difficult one. I don't know if she's going to read her reviews, but if she does, I want to thank her for her courage.I started reading this book at 8pm last night and I'm writing this review at 3:28am - I couldn't put it down. I watched the One Young World speech a few minutes ago again and cried (again). Ms Park talks about her

desire to free North Koreans, or even to convince the Chinese government to stop persecuting North Korean Refugees who managed to escape. From the way her strength of spirit just bleeds out of the words on every page of this book, I have no doubt she will succeed.

Yeonmi Park is a complete raconteur, it was difficult to put the book down. I finished her book in 2 days, and if I did not have errands, it would have been less. I was mesmerized by the different life she had in North Korea compared to my own in the U.S. I am happy I read this book. Park was thrust into the public eye because she was a defector from North Korea but her motive to go public was to find her sister. Eventually, she recognized how much her story made an impact on others and continues to tell us through her book. What I found to be captivating was the strong bond her family shares. Despite the many things that happened, they were completely devoted and loyal to each other. I found myself despising her father at a point because his risk put them in danger. While I realized that he did what he could for his family and with the circumstances, his actions are justified. I still felt the pain and anger her non-nuclear family felt towards her father.I will stop there because I do not want to disclose more than what can be found via youtube and the book description. In all, this book is great for getting an insider view of what it is like living in North Korea in the late 1990's and early 2000 years. It also shows the challenges of being a foreigner in a new country. It is a simple read, and the book does not bog you down with unnecessary details.

Everyone, especially everyone living in a democracy, needs to read this book. Once I started reading Yeonmi Park's story of her life in North Korea, her dramatic escape to China only to be caught in human trafficking, and her equally dramatic escape to South Korea, I could not put down the book; I read it in less than 24 hours. It turns out I knew nothing, really, about life in North Korea, nothing about human trafficking, and nothing about what it takes to survive in the worst of circumstances.Yeonmi Park tells her compelling story without dwelling on her circumstances or placing blame. A remarkably resilient and forgiving woman, she has something to teach us all, whether about compassion or gratitude or courage. Yeonmi Park is brave, wise, and compassionate. This is an important story that needs to be heard by everyone, a story that opens your eyes, your mind, and your heart to the possibilities that are within all of us.

This was such a powerful and heart wrenching story. Yeanmi Park is very brave to tell her story, even the parts that must be painful to admit. She tells her story in a compelling voice, tracing her childhood on to recent years. I won't give any spoilers, but I will say that she addresses some of the

controversy that arose between conflicting facts she used during her appearances and speeches, and it makes so much sense. My heart aches for her and all the other people who are still stuck in the life she once led. I believe this is worth reading, especially since so many people are still living in North Korea and suffering as she did when she was a child. It will really open your eyes to what's going on in our world even today.

I actually read this book in one sitting. It's a gripping story that tells of the horror of life in North Korea and what one incredible girl most do in order to save herself and her family. You wont be able to put it down. Highly recommended.

This book is a testament to the strength and power of the human spirit in the face of governmental abuse and how the desire for freedom can overcome a lifetime of deprivation and terror. Yeonmi Park exposes the North Korean dictatorship for what it is; a corrupt and consuming evil that enslaves a population that it views as having no value beyond service to the State. Her story is enthralling and extremely vivid. Her bravery and commitment to her family is wonderful. I highly recommend this book to anyone who feels like life is too difficult to carry on.

Download to continue reading...

Easy Korean Cookbook: 50 Unique and Authentic Korean Recipes (Korean Cookbook, Korean Recipes, Korean Food, Korean Cooking, Easy Korean Cookbook, Easy Korean Recipes, Easy Korean Cooking Book 1) Korean: Korean Recipes - The Very Best Korean Cookbook (Korean recipes, Korean cookbook, Korean cook book, Korean recipe, Korean recipe book) I Love My Dad (korean childrens books, korean baby book): korean for kids, korean for children, kids books in korean (Korean English Bilingual Collection) (Korean Edition) I Love to Brush My Teeth (english korean books,korean childrens books): korean bilingual books , korean kids books,bilingual korean books (English Korean Bilingual Collection) (Korean Edition) I Love My Mom (English Korean, korean childrens books): korean kids books,bilingual korean books, children ESL books (English Korean Bilingual Collection) (Korean Edition) I Love My Dad (English Korean Bilingual books, korean kids books): korean childrens books, english korean books for kids (English Korean Bilingual Collection) (Korean Edition) In Order to Live: A North Korean Girl's Journey to Freedom I Love to Share (english korean bilingual books): korean kids books, korean childrens books, hangul for kids (English Korean Bilingual Collecionť) (Korean Edition) I Love to Share (korean english bilingual books, korean baby book, korean kids book): korean for kids (Korean Edition) Welcome to Korean Food World: Unlock EVERY Secret of Cooking Through 500 AMAZING Korean Recipes (Korean

Cookbook, Korean Cuisine, Korean Cooking Pot, Asian Cuisine...) (Unlock Cooking, Cookbook [#8]) Jeaniene Frost Books Checklist and Reading Order : Night Prince series in order, Night Huntress series in order, Broken Destiny series in order and Night Huntress World series in order Charlaine Harris Schulz Books 2017 Checklist: The Aurora Teagarden Series in Order, Cemetery Girl Series in Order, Harper Connelly Series in Order, Lily Bard Series in Order and more! Fury from the North: North Korean Air Force in the Korean War, 1950-1953 (Asia@War) Learn Korean With Big Bang: Big Bang Songs To Learn Korean (Learn Korean With K-Pop Book 2) I Love My Dad: Korean English Bilingual Edition (Korean English Bilingual Collection) (Korean Edition) I Love to Keep My Room Clean: Korean English Bilingual Edition (Korean English Bilingual Collection) (Korean Edition) My Mom is Awesome: Korean English Bilingual Edition (Korean English Bilingual Collection) (Korean Edition) Teach Me Korean & More Korean, Bind Up Edition (Korean Edition) (Teach Me) I Love to Tell the Truth: Korean English Bilingual Edition (Korean English Bilingual Collection) (Korean Edition) I Love to Help: English Korean Bilingual Edition (English Korean Bilingual Collection) (Korean Edition)

Contact Us

DMCA

Privacy

FAQ & Help