



**LIBERTY
IN
NORTH
KOREA**

I will never forget how cold it was next to the river.

The snow seeped into my shoes and the wind blew through my jacket. I shivered in the knee-deep snow, waiting for my chance to escape. The moment came and I slid down the riverbank and onto the ice.

When I made it to the Chinese side, it took me hours to find the broker I was supposed to meet. By the time I found her, my toes were frozen white. The broker took me to her home to rest and recover.

But soon I realized I was trapped. She told me that I had to repay her, and the other brokers, for helping me escape. And because I had no money, the only option was to be sold as a bride to a Chinese man.

For three days, the broker paraded me around villages in northern China and crowds of men would gather to bid on me. My cheeks were still red and raw from the night I had crossed the river.

In the final village, I sat cowering in the corner of a house while older Chinese men circled me. I stared at the floor to avoid looking into their eyes. I couldn't understand what they were saying, but I could tell they were talking about me. The broker finally found a man who was willing to pay enough for me. **I was sold for \$3,000.**

Joy

Escaped North Korea in 2009



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My father was an alcoholic.

He used to beat my mom when he was drunk. Sometimes, after he abused her, she would run away. My greatest fear was that she wouldn't come back and it would be just me and him. To me, he was worse than the North Korean regime.

I grew up next to the ocean and it became like a second home. Every morning, I woke up and strolled along the beach. On special days, the sea gave me little gifts like shellfish or anchovies.

One day, I swam out really far. I think it was probably the furthest I'd ever gone. I was so far out, I could barely see the tiny dots of people walking on the shore. I loved the feeling of floating on the water and looking up at the sky.

I think that was the happiest moment of my life in North Korea. The only sounds were the seagulls wailing and the rhythm of my breath. The water was chilly but the sunshine on my face was warm. Way out there, there was no abusive father or North Korean regime. Just me, floating.

Eun Jeong

Escaped North Korea in 2009



Jessie

"I want to tell my story because I never want anyone to have to go through what I have. If telling my story means one day that's possible, I want to share."



Geum Hyeok

"It's so important to recognize the potential of the North Korean people. If their potential and freedom come together, we will see incredible things happen."





Geumju

"After graduating from high school I realized I'd never live the life I wanted in North Korea. I couldn't do what I wanted or dress how I wanted. So I left to find freedom."



Danbi

"I used to dream of seeing the ocean when I was in North Korea. When I resettled in South Korea I moved as close to the sea as possible. It reminds me that I am free."