

The Orphan Master's Son: A Novel Study Guide

**The Orphan Master's Son: A Novel by Adam Johnson
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Plot Summary

The novel, "The Orphan Master's Son" by Adam Johnson, tells the story of two North Korean men, both of whom rebel against the country's tyrannical government. Through their stories, the reader gets a glimpse of what life is like in this part of the world. The people, and their lives, are held at the whim of a selfish leader who has his people kidnap, steal and cheat to get him what he wants. Other themes addressed in the novel include the development of true love, loyalty and the truth.

The main character of the novel is Pak Jun Do, the son of an orphan master. Jun Do names himself after a Korean martyr heralded for his loyalty. Initially, Jun Do works as a tunnel soldier in the Korean Army and then is sent to serve as a spy on a fishing vessel. When one of the shipmates defects, Jun Do distracts attention by letting himself be mauled by a shark, thus preventing his shipmates from being sent to prison. With his wounds still fresh, Jun Do is sent to America on a diplomatic mission. Since the mission does not go as planned, Jun Do is condemned to a work prison.

When Jun Do surfaces again, he has killed Commander Ga and taken over his identity. As Commander Ga, Jun Do helps Sun Moon, who is the real Commander Ga's wife, and her children escape to America. Jun Do had first become interested in Sun Moon when the image of her face was tattooed onto his chest. This was part of the ruse employed to fool any Americans who might have boarded the fishing vessel where he was stationed into believing he was married. In the prison camp, Jun Do is allowed to watch one of Sun Moon's movies and he falls in love with her. She becomes his refuge from pain. When he is able to kill her cruel husband and escape from jail, he decides to help save her from her life of misery.

The interrogator who questions Commander Ga/Jun Do in Division 42 has a life that closely mirrors that of Jun Do. He has served his position in Korea without question, believing that one day the department in which he works will transform into a less violent way of interrogating its prisoners. He is disturbed by his parents, who have become paranoid and distant in their old age. In addition, one of his interns is taken into custody by the Pubyok while another - to this violent interrogation division, causing him to lose faith in his vision for his future. The narrator seeks the truth from his subjects, spending days and sometimes weeks transcribing their biographies. The narrator seems to lose complete faith in his country when he hears the story of Sun Moon and Commander Ga being broadcast over the national loudspeaker system. This story angers him not only because it has been falsified but also because he has not even gotten the true story out of Ga yet.

In the end of the novel, the narrator kills his parents by feeding them a can of peaches infected with botulism. In this way, he does not have to worry about them being sent to a work prison in their old age. He also hooks himself and Ga up to a machine called the autopilot that clears a person's mind of their memory. While the narrator wants only a quiet life on a work farm where he might have a wife with whom to share his woes, Ga

no longer wants to be a part of the Korean society. As the narrator's machine is beginning to work, he notices that Ga turns his setting up to the highest setting.



Prelude and Part One, Pages 3-30

Prelude and Part One, Pages 3-30 Summary

In the prologue, news pertinent to the Koreans is broadcasted over loudspeakers. It is reported that Americans have attacked a Korean fishing ship. The Korean government claims it is innocent of having done anything to incite the attack. Other news includes the contradiction of rumors that Sun Moon and Commander Ga are no longer in love, as well as the introduction of a new opera singer in Pyongyang.

The Biography of Jun Do follows. Jun Do lives at Long Tomorrows, the orphanage where his father is the master. Jun Do isn't sure what happened to his mother, but believes she was kidnapped and taken to Pyongyang. Jun Do is in charge of naming the orphans, portioning food, and assigning bunks. Although his father is the master, Jun Do is not given special treatment. If anything, he is treated more cruelly.

When the famine comes in Chongjin, Jun Do is sent with the other orphans to the Army. He is working as a tunnel soldier when Officer So discovers him and trains him to be a kidnapper. Along with an accomplice, Gil, he first practices on Japanese tourists and then kidnap a soprano from the Tokyo Opera named Rumina.

Prelude and Part One, Pages 3-30 Analysis

Two different points of view are expressed in the first portion of this novel. The prologue gives some information as it is broadcast to the Korean people over the nation's loudspeaker system. In these announcements, the animals are portrayed in such a way that they appear to support the Korean government. The doves, for instance, are animals who are often described as protecting the Dear Leader. Similarly, it is indicated by the loudspeaker information that the sharks even work to help the Koreans.

Other aspects of this broadcast that will later become important in the novel include the mention of the girl that rowed to Korea in an attempt to defect to that country. It will later be learned that this girl's story was changed to fit the desires of the Korean government. The relationship between Sun Moon and Commander Ga will also be important later on.

The news given over the loudspeaker is spun so that it makes the Koreans appear faultless while the Americans and Japanese are portrayed as being cruel, vindictive and as enemies to Korea. When the Biography of Jun Do begins, it is learned that Jun Do has come from a part of Korea badly affected by a famine. On the loudspeakers that announce the news, however, he notices there is never any mention made of the hardships in his part of the country. When the troubles there are referred to, they are called the Arduous March, but Jun Do knows more than just a tough journey. He has seen the bunks in the orphanage burned for heat, the electrical system and train system down, and people eating tree bark for food. This is Jun Do's background. This is why he does not want to look inside the Japanese houses. He is afraid that if he sees the luxury



with which they live, his life will seem insignificant. It is also possible that Jun Do knows that if he looks inside the houses of the Japanese, he will realize these people actually lead better lives than he does. Even with all of the propaganda spewed by the Korean loudspeakers, Jun Do seems to realize there is something wrong with the North Korean way of life.

Another aspect raised in this section of the novel is the idea of names and identity. Because Jun Do came from an orphanage and is named after one of Korea's martyrs, people automatically assume that he is an orphan, an assumption that angers Jun Do. He believes that people don't fully appreciate the hurt that his father was in when his mother left, or was kidnapped. Being the orphan master was the only way for him to keep his son, but his father could not bear to give his son his own name. For this reason, Jun Do names himself after a martyr known for his loyalty. Gil gives Jun Do a piece of advice that he later follows, though he may not realize it. Gil suggests to Jun Do that he does not have anyone to live up to or impress so he is free to invent himself to be anyone whom he wants to be. Jun Do does not know or does not remember his mother's name. Besides, he reasons that knowing her name would not fix any of his current problems.

Also in this section, Jun Do turns into the same type of person whom he suspects took his mother from him when he was a child. It is after he and Gil push the girl who cannot swim from the pier that Jun Do realizes how truly inhumane his job is. When he learns that the girl sank straight to the bottom of the ocean, Jun Do asks Gil and Officer So how they cannot keep count of the number of people whom they have kidnapped and taken away from their families.



Part One, Pages 31-59

Part One, Pages 31-59 Summary

After Rumina is successfully kidnapped, Gil runs away and Jun Do is sent to bring him back. Gil intends to defect. He believes that eventually he will be sent to prison. At the least, he will end up like Officer So. When Jun Do takes Gil back to the boat, Officer So suggests he will get a reward because he caught a defector. Rumina, however, kicks him in the face for his efforts. Jun Do feels like she had been able to see all the choices that he had made through the years, sending some orphans to their deaths while others he allowed to live.

Jun Do is sent to a language school to learn to transcribe English. He is given a listening post on the fishing vessel Junma on the East Sea. Jun Do's job is to eavesdrop on all radio transmissions. He also hears the transmissions of two American girls with a goal of rowing around the world. The crew of the boat only begins to like Jun Do when he begins sharing the transmissions made by the two girls. Jun Do is intrigued by a transmission that he believes include both a speaker with a Russian and an American accent. While he believes this transmission comes from below them, a crewmate helps him to discover that it actually comes from above.

During a mission to get fresh shrimp for the Dear Leader, the Captain stares into the fog. There is an American ship approaching. The Americans board their ship. They discover Jun Do is not a fisherman when they ask him to dump the net alone. When they see he has no tattoo, indicating that he is not married, the Americans believe that he is a spy.

When the Americans see how low tech the Koreans' equipment is and realize in what poor repair the ship is, they begin to doubt the men are spies. One American sailor comes out wearing the DPRK flag as a cloak and another removes the picture of Kim Jong Il, Pak realizes what a grave mistake this is and asks the man to replace the picture. When another comes out wearing the Captain's hat, the second mate pulls his knife on the sailor. Jun Do takes the hat back, and then throws the knife into the sea. One of the officers gives Jun Do his card, and then the Americans leave the boat.

Part One, Pages 31-59 Analysis

Defection becomes an issue in this section as Gil tries to escape from his task of kidnapping. Jun Do doesn't seem at first to realize what has really happened with Gil. But Officer So's threats make him realize the seriousness of the consequences if they go back to Korea without him. Gil, it turns out, wants to be a painter, but his father had him stationed in the minefields in order to toughen him up. Although he is from an elite Korean family, Gil indicates that his family is gone now. He is sure that one day he will end up in the prison camps, as he seems to believe is the fate of all Koreans. Worse



than prison, however, Gil is afraid that he will turn into Officer So, who cares about nothing but kidnapping and bringing back the people that the Korean government has ordered him to.

Gil asks Jun Do a thought provoking question when he asks why Jun Do does not want to defect as well. Jun Do believes that he has had every opportunity to run away but simply hasn't wanted to. He tells Gil that the country of Japan does not make sense to him. He only understands that the Korean ladies are treated subserviently and made to wash the feet of the Japanese. Jun Do has not yet come to believe as Gil has that everyone in Korea will eventually wind up in jail. In fact, he had not even considered the possibility of being sent to a prison. He does not yet view himself as a prisoner of his own country, a realization at which Gil has already arrived.

Although Jun Do has already realized that what he is doing is not right, it is the eyes of Rumina, the kidnapped opera singer, watching him as they go back to Korea that Jun Do finds most condescending. He feels that she knows every decision that he has made that has set an orphan down a path to death, how he decided which ones got the better food and which ones got leftovers as well as which ones got risky jobs. Now, Rumina has watched as Jun Do has not only helped in her kidnapping but has also brought back a man who intended to defect. In her eyes, he represents everything that is wrong with Korea and its leadership. Rumina is described as having a wedding ring and a scar from a c-section, proof that she has a family that she has been taken away from because of the selfishness of the Korean leader. Jun Do, who feels himself at the mercy of his background, asks her what choice he had. The situation tugs at his conscious, however, because he realizes this is what it must have been like for his mother, whom he believes was kidnapped and taken away from him.

After the kidnappings end, Jun Do is stationed on a fishing vessel as a "information officer." In reality, he is acting as a spy. His job is to listen in on radio transmissions picked up from other boats, and at one point from space, and transcribe them. The fishermen on the boat don't like having Jun Do there because they are afraid that he will get them into trouble. At one point, they are almost right. They are saved only by the poor condition of their boat, the antiquated nature of their equipment and Jun Do's quick thinking. The Koreans are fairly accepting of the Americans' intention to search their boat until they take not only the Korean flag and the pictures of the Dear Leader from the pilot house, but also the Captain's hat. It is at this point that the Second Mate cracks and pulls a knife on the Americans. One of the American leaders has already begun to plead for the Koreans, telling his friends that the men will be placed in danger of being sent to prison if they return to port without the pictures, but the men don't listen. After Jun Do takes the knife from the Second Mate and throws it into the sea, the Americans leave. They first give the Koreans a fire extinguisher and a lifeboat.

One of the ideas to note in this section is that Jun Do has realized that he needs to feel that people are in communication with one another. He needs to believe that there is a purpose to what people do. Although the men who are with Jun Do believe these ideas sound like conspiracy theory, it should be realized that so far in his life, Jun Do has not

been given much of a reason why he has done the things that he has done. He has simply been shuffled from assignment to assignment as the Korean government saw fit.



Part One, Pages 60-89

Part One, Pages 60-89 Summary

In this section of the novel, Jun Do is still stationed on the Junma. The Captain scolds Jun Do for his actions, saying that it was the Second Mate who did right by standing up for the Koreans. He says they must make up a story to explain what happened to their flag and portraits. First, they want to say that there was a fire in the pilothouse, but Jun Do comes up with a better story in which the Second Mate kills the Americans with his knife in an effort to protect the pictures of the Dear Leader.

A group of people, including a newspaper reporter is waiting for them when they come back into port. They take Jun Do's story then he is free to go to his home. He lives in the house formerly occupied by the canning master and his family. There had been an outbreak of botulism in the canning factory that apparently killed many Japanese. Jun Do is putting together a transmission radio in his spare time.

The next morning, the Second Mate, who looks like he's been in a fight, comes to Jun Do's door. He tells him that he has been made a hero. In their conversation, the Second Mate mentions to Jun Do that the Captain has said that because he was an orphan, no one ever taught him loyalty.

When the Junma goes out on its next mission, it has been outfitted with a new galley table, commode, flag and pictures of the Dear Leader. The Captain has also decided to make Jun Do an official member of the ship's crew by giving him a tattoo of a "wife." They choose Korea's national actress, Sun Moon, explaining to him that the tattoo is not for those in North Korea, who would recognize her, but for Americans and South Koreans so that it will appear he is truly a member of the fishing crew.

Meanwhile, Jun do is continuing to keep track of the pair of American girls who are attempting to row around the world. That night, he gets transmissions from one of the girls because she believes that the guidance system on their craft is broken. She asks for someone to come and rescue them. Jun Do realizes that he is the reason that their ship is unable to help her. Since they have already been boarded by Americans, the Captain allows Jun Do to broadcast his transmissions to the deck of the ship. It is the Captain who realizes that the phantom voices that Jun Do has been hearing have actually been coming from space rather than from deep in the sea. These people who are supposed to be enemies are in space playing chess together in the name of peace and brotherhood.

The next morning, Jun Do wakes early hearing something bump up against the ship. The life raft has been inflated and the Second Mate is piling tins into it. He offers to allow Jun do to go with him. He tells Jun Do that he helped him to realize that they were the ones "at the bottom of the ocean." It is later in the morning when the rest of the crew realizes that the Second Mate is gone. The Captain is visibly afraid of being sent back



to prison. They come up with a story that the Second was thrown overboard by the angry Americans, who came back to the ship, and was attacked by sharks. Jun Do jumps down to try to save the Second Mate and is also mauled by the sharks. They bring up a shark to bite Jun Do's arm to make the story real.

A patrol boat escorts the Jumna to shore and a crowd again meets the boat. Jun Do is given a bag of blood and taken to the old cannery. A man with a flattop and busted hands questions him. He tells him the Second Mate had been picked up in the raft that morning, but Jun Do doesn't fall for the trick. The man hits Jun Do in the face and ribs. Jun Do uses his pain training to keep himself steady while the man continues to question and to hit. When he finishes, the man certifies that Jun do is a hero.

Part One, Pages 60-89 Analysis

The importance of the story becomes significant in this section of the novel. Believing that Jun Do has disgraced them, the Captain comes up with a story about a fire in the pilothouse that burned the flag and portraits. He tells Jun Do that the story is more important than the people, that the Koreans don't care about people, only the story that they tell. He chides Jun Do for believing that the people on the American ship had any compassion for the Koreans at all. In fact, the second mate is heralded as a hero for trying to start a fight while Jun Do is chided for putting an end to the argument.

The crew of the Junma is again forced to come up with a story when the Second Mate defects. They decide to tell a story about the Americans returning and throwing the Second Mate overboard. Jun Do is charged with being bitten by a shark as proof that he jumped overboard in an attempt to save the Second Mate. Although Jun Do believes the story is not believable, the Captain believes that it is one that will keep him and the rest of the crew out of jail.

The belief that Jun Do is an orphan continues to cause issues for him in this section of the novel. For instance, after the crew's encounter with the American ship, the captain blames Jun Do's willingness to make peace with the Americans on the fact that Jun Do was an orphan. Jun Do later learns that the captain believes that he did not develop any loyalties was because he did not have a family. In this same discussion with the second mate, Jun Do makes the comment that it is believed that orphans took over other people's lives. This idea foreshadows events that will come later in Jun Do's life.

Another event that will help to determine the direction of Jun Do's life also takes place during this section of the novel. Since he did not have the tattoo of a woman's face on his chest, the Americans had realized that Jun Do was not a member of the fishing crew. They know that the Korean government only sends married men out on fishing vessels. For this reason, the captain, tattoos the image of Sun Moon, the national actress on Jun Do's chest. It is with this tattoo that Jun Do's interest in the actress begins. As the captain tattoos Sun Moon onto Jun Do, he and the other crew members tell him what they know about the national actress. Jun Do is impressed by the sadness that he sees in the actress' eyes. He learns that for many years the Dear Leader would



not let Sun Moon marry. It was only after Commander Ga won the Golden Belt that he demanded Sun Moon as his reward. Since that time, the men tell Jun Do that Sun Moon has become lonely and melancholy.

Notice how the meaning of Jun Do's tattoo changes throughout the course of the novel. At this point it is just a mark that will keep any Americans or South Koreans from questioning why Jun Do is on the fishing vessel and from suspecting that he is a spy. Jun Do questions why the others have these women tattooed on their chests. They explain to him that it is a way of implanting their wives permanently on themselves, a sort of visual representation of the relationship they have.

Notice also what the Second Mate says to Jun Do just before he defects from the ship. He says this is was Jun Do who made him realize that they are the ones on the bottom of the ocean. This could mean that he had realized how backward the ways of the Koreans are. That instead of promoting world peace and brotherhood, they are working against it. The Second Mate's defection also illustrates why the crew of the fishing vessel was not allowed to have a life raft. With out this life raft, the crew could not escape if something were to happen to the ship, but they also did not have a way to defect. The Koreans apparently find it more important to keep people from defecting from their country than from saving them in case of an emergency.



Part One, Pages 90-116

Part One, Pages 90-116 Summary

It is the Second Mate's wife who nurses Jun Do. Since her husband has died a hero, she believes that she will be sent to Pyongyang. The Captain visits and brings beer and tuna. He tells Jun Do that the people of Korea will want to show him off as a hero. Jun Do tells him that he only wants to stay on the Junma.

Later, Jun Do hears whoops coming from the ground. He knows these sounds involve the Second Mate's wife in some way. When she comes in, Jun Do can tell that she has been crying. She tells him about her pretty friends who disappeared to the capital, that her father would never let her attend those days when the girls were lined up and the pretty ones chosen. He tells the Second Mate's wife that he wishes that he had his radio. The next morning, he wakes to find that she has brought it to him.

The old interrogator comes to visit him. He asks if there is anything wrong between himself and the Captain because the Captain has requested that Jun Do be put on another boat. He says that he suspects that the Captain's wife left him. He also indicates to Jun Do there are no plans to send the Second Mate's wife to Pyongyang.

Jun Do spends the rest of the day working on his radio. That evening he and the Second Mate's wife string up the antenna. He tells her that they need to send a message to her husband. Jun Do transmits information that he believes will help the man survive. The wife asks him not to listen to her broadcast, but he unplugs his ears when he realizes she is singing.

The next morning, when they are on top of the roof taking down the antenna, the Second Mate's wife notices a black Mercedes pull up. Believing it is coming to take her to the capital, she runs and puts on a new dress. Jun Do tells her about the husbands that have been picked out for her. He tries to get her to run away but instead she asks him to marry her and save her from her fate. It turns out that the men have come for Jun Do.

Part One, Pages 90-116 Analysis

The loudspeakers are devices that are required for every Korean household and business. Information, mostly propaganda, is transmitted over these loudspeakers at different times during the day. On this particular day, a few days before the black Mercedes comes for Jun Do, the loudspeakers broadcast that a delegation will be sent to America for diplomacy. This is a foreshadowing of Jun Do's next mission.

Of interest in this section is Jun Do's relationship with the Second Mate's wife. This woman is given, or takes on, the duty of taking care of Jun Do until her recovers from his injuries. She believes that since she is the wife of a deceased hero that she will



finally get her dream of going to Pyongyang. Instead, Jun Do learns that a replacement husband has been picked out for her that will take her no place near Pyongyang.

The visitors that Jun Do receives during his recuperation are also interesting. The first person who comes to visit him is the Captain. The Captain seems to believe that Jun Do can get his wife back for him now that he has been declared a hero. The next person who comes to visit Jun do is the old interrogator who beat Jun Do so badly. He suggests that the Captain's wife ran away because the Captain had been sent to jail.



Part One, Pages 117-148

Part One, Pages 117-148 Summary

The men drive Jun Do to a deserted air base. Dr. Song and Commander Buc meet them near a running plane. When they see the tattoo, Dr. Song comments that Commander Buc is neighbors with Sun Moon. Commander Buc introduces Jun Do to the Minister, who is really only Dr. Song's driver. He learns from the men that they are headed to Texas to talk about some coming engagements between the Koreans and Americans.

The intention of the talks is to request that the Americans stop their practice of boarding the Korean ships. They want Jun Do to tell the story of his attack by the sharks. Jun Do doubts the Americans will believe his story but Dr. Song explains that in America it is the person that matters, not the story, and that the people will believe him. They show Jun Do a cooler of tiger meat they have brought. They tell Jun Do the meat is actually only cow flank, but they want to offend the Americans and play with their emotions.

After the plane lands, the Texans take their visitors on a side trip. Dr. Song is disturbed because the Minister rides alone in a car with the Senator. The Senator and his workers try to buy the men cowboy boots but they refuse first because there are none for the Dear Leader, then because the men feel they shouldn't wear the same boots as ones intended for the Dear Leader. They are then shown how brush is cut in Texas and are allowed to shoot with antique guns. They are also given the opportunity to fish. The Minister is offended when the Texans throw his fish back.

During the meal, Wanda gets to know Jun Do. Even though she doesn't know Korean, she knows that Jun Do has muddled some of the translations. She asks if there is anything they can do for him. When the cooler comes out, Jun Do realizes that things are about to change between the Americans and Koreans. He asks Wanda if she is serious about her offer to answer his questions. He gives her the name of the Second Mate to find out if he had made it to America. After the "tiger" meat is brought out and the Senator takes charge of it, Dr. Song brings attention to Jun Do's arm in an attempt to regain control of the situation. The need for medical attention gets the Senator's wife's attention. Dr. Song tries to wave her off but she is obviously angry with him. She directs Jun Do to the kitchen to remove his stitches.

Jun Do tells the women he has never seen a doctor and that a friend did the stitches. With his shirt off, they notice the tattoo of his "wife." They take a picture. When they ask what she is like, he combines a description of the Second Mate's wife and what he has heard about Sun Moon from the others. The Senator's wife asks if she can speak to Sun Moon, if she could help her. The women begin to discuss the tiger meat. Jun Do tells them that his wife would tell them to throw it out and replace it with flank steak as there is no difference in the taste. The Senator's wife settles Jun Do into a room to sleep. She tries to witness to him about Christ but Jun Do tells her he cannot possess a Bible in



Korea. When she leaves, Jun Do makes a list of all the people he helped kidnap and take to North Korea.

Part One, Pages 117-148 Analysis

The main issue in this section of the novel is the interactions between the Americans and the North Koreans. The North Koreans travel to America in the name of diplomacy but they seem to go with the intention of angering the Americans. They purposefully take along a cooler full of what they call tiger meat because they know that the Americans do not consider the tiger an animal to be killed for meat. They have also taken along a man whom they refer to as a "minister," or man of power in the Korean government, who is really nothing more than Dr. Song's driver. While the Koreans seem set on offending the Americans intentionally, the Americans offend the Koreans unintentionally on a variety of occasions as they attempt to be cordial to their guests and show them what life is like in America. One example of this is side trip in which the Koreans are taken to a boot shop to be fitted for cowboy boots. Dr. Song is first offended because the Americans do not offer to provide a pair of boots for the Dear Leader. Next, he is offended when the Americans suggest that a pair of boots be sent to the Dear Leader. The offense here comes because Dr. Song does not believe he is worthy of wearing a pair of boots of which the Dear Leader had a similar pair.

It is also in this section of the novel that Jun Do meets Commander Buc. Their relationship will become important later on in the novel. Commander Buc lives next door to Commander Ga and Sun Moon. He tells Jun Do that Sun Moon is no longer given movie roles since she married Commander Ga. He says that she has grown mournful and melancholy.



Part One, Pages 149-176

Part One, Pages 149-176 Summary

Wanda tells Jun Do that she has not been able to find any information about his friend. He gives her the list of kidnap victims that he has compiled. During dinner, Jun Do asks if they know about the American rowers. He learns the boat was found partly burned with blood of one girl but nothing of the other. Jun Do shares with them what he heard of their broadcasts. They ask about his wound and Jun Do tells the story as rehearsed. The senator's wife disputes the truth of the story. Later, Wanda comes to visit Jun Do in his room. They believe that he is Commander Ga because of the tattoo on his chest. Wanda gives Jun Do a small camera that will take pictures and send them back to her. She shows him a cell phone that will receive the pictures.

That night, Jun Do has a dream about Bo Song. Jun Do feels that Bo Song is trying to tell him something important but can't tell what it is. He goes outside to talk to Dr. Song. Dr. Song will not tell him how the talks have gone, there is only sadness in his voice as he speaks about how he has outlasted all of his friends. The next morning, the senator's wife gives Jun Do a puppy to take to Sun Moon. On the ride back to the plane, the Senator asks Jun Do to ride with him. The Senator believes he has been done wrong during the talks as he was left talking to two nobodies while he believes that Jun Do is Commander Ga, the important one all along. He sends a message to the Dear Leader. He says that because of the way that the Americans were treated, they would continue boarding the boats and that the Koreans would never get their background radiation detector back.

In their story, they decide that they will say that the talks were going well until the president intervened. Before the plane touches down, Jun Do asks Commander Buc if he will get the puppy to Sun Moon. When Dr. Song sees crows on the runway, the only vehicles that can transport people to prisons, he panics and orders the story changed. He says they must tell that the Americans never intended to give the detector back and that they humiliated the Koreans during their stay.

Jun Do, the Minister and Dr. Song are separated in an abandoned hangar and asked to tell their stories. One of the crow drivers comes for Jun Do. Jun Do is told he is being given a ride with some medics on a mission of mercy. When they arrive at an encampment, the men tell Jun Do to get the cooler. The men begin taking blood from the dying people in the infirmary. A photographer is taking pictures of people leaving from and arriving at the infirmary. The photographer hands Jun Do a hat she has taken off a dead man and tells him that he needs to find a pair of boots. She takes his picture and tells him he needs to find his barracks. After this point, nothing else is known about Jun Do.



Part One, Pages 149-176 Analysis

The idea of the importance of a man's story surfaces again in this section of the novel. In the words of Dr. Song, Jun Do is told that in Korea it is the story that is most important. If a man and the story that is told about him is different, it is the man who should change. In America, however, the story is not all-important. While people often change their stories, what the people in America care about is the person. Jun Do is right in his concerns that the Americans would not believe the story about their fishing vessel being boarded again by the Americans. It is humorous, though, that the Americans also come to believe that it is Jun Do who is the person of power among the visitors from Korea. Due to his tattoo, they believe that he is the husband of Sun Moon. In reality, Jun Do probably has less influence on the Korean government than Dr. Song's driver. Regardless, it is to Jun Do that the Senator swears that the Americans will not stop boarding Korean ships and will not give Korea back the radiation detector that they stole from the Japanese.

Jun Do is struck while in America by the pictures of the Senator's family that are hung on the walls. He is enthralled by the way the family unit has stayed together through the years. This idea is startlingly different from the way of life in Korea where families, such as Jun Do's, were often separated and the members never heard from again. Jun Do is also impressed by the American telephone book in which a person could look up the name of a person and easily find a way to get in touch with them. In this spirit, he makes a list of the people whom he had a hand in kidnapping and taking to North Korea. He gives this list to Wanda in hopes that it will bring some comfort to the families of these kidnap victims.

Wanda seems to sense a difference in Jun Do right away as she realizes that he is not correctly translating some of the Korean coming from Dr. Song. She believes at first that he might want their help in defecting from his country but Jun Do will not do so. When he leaves, Wanda gives Jun Do a camera with which to take pictures of anything that he thinks that she ought to see. The first thing that he takes a picture of is the infirmary wall at Prison 33 where there are no pictures of the Dear Leader. To a Korean, this lack of portraits means that they are in a place that has no importance or figuratively does not exist.



Part Two, Pages 177-208

Part Two, Pages 177-208 Summary

This section begins with the rumor that Commander Ga has been captured and is in the hands of Division 42. Division 42 is an interrogation group made of the Pubyok who try to beat a confession out of people while the narrator's division uses sharp thinking and science in their interrogations. After a biography is complete, the person is zapped with electricity and sent to a labor farm.

The Pubyok have already accused Ga of being an imposter but Sarge agrees to turn him over to the narrator. Q-Kee, an intern, asks first where Sun Moon's body is, but the narrator reminds her they must build a relationship. Ga tells them about a dream in which he and Sun Moon are driving an American car. The narrator believes Ga's story will be the most important that he has ever written. He goes home to his apartment on the twenty-second floor where he lives with his blind, paranoid parents. The narrator thinks of something and tells his parents he needs to go back to work. He has realized that Ga first met Sun Moon when he watched one of her films. After the interrogator leaves the first time, Ga thinks of the events of the first time he saw one of Sun Moon's movies as a prisoner in the mines.

The next section is a loudspeaker announcement telling about the upcoming installments of this year's Best North Korean Story. In the following section, Q-Kee tries to involve Ga in conversation over breakfast. After he finishes eating, he will say only that they will not find Sun Moon and her kids. He tells the story of the night before the real Commander Ga's visit to the prison camp, how Mongnan had gotten him some sorts of food to eat. The Pubyok get tired of Ga's story and take him.

Part Two, Pages 177-208 Analysis

This section of the novel begins the second part of the story. It features a new voice as it is told from the first person point of view of an unnamed narrator in Division 42. It is also in a new style as it switches in style from the narrator's first person point of view, to the omniscient third person point of view describing Ga's memories of his time with Sun Moon, and then to the direct address feel of the parts of the novel presented as loudspeaker presentations.

The narrator in this portion of the novel is a worker with Division 42 who is as innocent as Jun do was when he first was taken to Prison 33. He believes that what he is doing by writing citizen biographies will have a significant affect on the direction of the justice system in North Korea. As the Koreans want him to, the narrator finds it repulsive to think in terms of "I" and for this reason has been unsuccessful in writing his own biography. He feels more comfortable with the communal "we" that the government teaches the North Koreans is more important than the individuals and their desires.



Part Two, Pages 209-239

Part Two, Pages 209-239 Summary

It is late before the narrator receives charge of Ga again. They find evidence that Ga has been given cranial shots of electricity. Sarge admits, however, that they were not able to get the truth out of Ga. The interrogators finally allow Ga to ask his question. He asks who the can of peaches in his room belongs to, then he apologizes for what he did to Comrade Buc.

As Ga lays in bed, he thinks of Sun Moon, the only thing that really ever worked for him as a pain reserve. He believes that she saved him from everything. He remembers the day he walked out of the prison wearing Ga's uniform and got into Ga's car. When he finally saw the actress, she asks him only to make up with the Dear Leader so that she can get another acting role. He assures her everything will be different from that point forward. He tells her that Ga attacked him in that prison mines and that he killed him. At the door, Sun Moon's children are holding Brando by the collar. Sun Moon is surprised the imposter Ga knows the dog's name. He tells her that he is the one who got the dog for her.

The loudspeakers deliver the first installment of the Best North Korean Story, a propagandized version of the relationship between Sun Moon and the new Ga. This story describes a meeting between Ga and the Dear Leader in which the Dear Leader tells Ga that he has mischief planned for their American friends. He asks if Ga will assist him.

In reality, the Dear Leader is cruel to Ga at their first meeting and tells Ga that he wants to deliver a blow to the Americans. He takes Ga to the master computer and Ga types in his own name. The Dear Leader wants Ga to help them create a fake Texas in Korea. He plans to lure the Americans to Korea using the captive female American rower as bait. Jun Do takes a picture of the girl on the camera that Wanda had given to him.

Part Two, Pages 209-239 Analysis

It is in this section of the book that things begin to be clarified, both for the reader and for other characters in the novel. After hearing Ga speak about his experiences in prison, the interrogators believe that he may have had contact with Duc Dan, one of the retired Pubyok interrogators, in Prison 33. Even the stalwart Sarge is obviously upset by the possibility that a man thought to be one of the best Pubyok wound up in a work prison.

When Jun Do/Ga leaves the prison, he has with him the box of pictures that have been taken of people when they enter the prison as well as pictures of the same people when they are dead and leaving the prison. When Jun Do looks at his own photo, he remembers how innocent he was when he was first taken to the prison. He had believed



that he had done nothing wrong and that he would not be taken to a prison as others had. Jun Do, like the others, was wrong. Apparently in North Korea the story doesn't matter as much as Dr. Song had said that it did. If the North Korean government believed a person was a threat, they found a way to bring that person under their control either by confining them to a prison or zapping them of their memories and placing them in a work commune, as those in Division 42 did.

In this section of the novel, hints are given that the Dear Leader knows Ga's real identity. For instance, the Dear Leader asks for Ga's help in creating a Texas-like place in Korea. The only reason that the Dear Leader would have had to do this would be if he knew that Ga had visited Texas. Also note that the Dear Leader taunts Ga with the master computer. The Dear Leader pretends to find it amusing that Ga types in his own name in the computer but this could be a sign not only that the Dear Leader knows that the man is not the real Commander Ga, but also that Jun Do/Ga knows that the Dear Leader knows he is not the real Commander Ga.

It is also learned in this section of the novel that during his time in Prison 33 that Jun Do used Sun Moon as his pain reserve. Although his pain teacher in the Army had taught him long ago to choose a pain reserve that would take him to a place where the pain a person was trying to afflict upon him could not hurt him, Jun Do could never successfully do this until he first saw Sun Moon acting in a movie. Even when the Pubyok use cranial electricity on Ga, they cannot reach him and extricate the truth from him because he is hiding in Sun Moon, his pain reserve.



Part Two, Pages 240-267

Part Two, Pages 240-267 Summary

When he returns home, Sun Moon greets Jun Do as she would her real husband. He tells her that the Dear Leader has an assignment for him and that he suspects that when it is finished, he will disappear. They hear a truck coming up the mountain. Buc steps out onto his balcony and asks Sun Moon and her family if they want to join them. They first go to the tunnel, but Buc finds them there. He tells the family they have to come with him as where they are is the first place they will look. In the house, Buc's family is seated around a table with a can of peaches. The soldier asks for Ga. Instead of taking him away, though, the soldier hands him an invitation to a state dinner and the keys to a Mustang. Buc comes out and tells Ga how well the dry run went. He hands Ga his own can of peaches telling him that he got the last case from Fruit Factory 49 before it was burned.

Sun Moon helps Ga prepare for the state dinner. At the Grand People's Opera House, Commander Pack is the first person to greet the couple. He brags about his Songun Cross medal, then gives Ga a vicious uppercut. When the program begins, a man pretending to be Ryoktosan walks up to Ga. The small man dances around Ga in a taekwondo move and hits him several times. Out of a pain reflex, Ga hits the man in the nose. A spotlight shows the Dear Leader clapping, standing in a balcony. It is when the Dear Leader acknowledges Ga as a national defender, Sun Moon understands that her husband is really not coming back. Meanwhile, Sun Moon has learned that her movie will not be produced. She tells Ga that this must be what hunger feels like. He makes her eat a flower from the floral arrangement on the table to understand what true hunger is.

The story is picked up by the loudspeaker version of the tale in which the Korean leaders take the opportunity to teach the citizens that while the things of Korea, such as the car, belong to the government, a wife belongs to her husband. Though a woman may want to remain chaste after losing her first husband, it is her duty to have marital relations with her replacement husband. The story switches back to the third person narration of Ga and Sun Moon. After they have gone to bed, Sun Moon lays out the rules. She tells Ga that he must not let her run out of cigarettes, and that the children will decide when they want him to know their names. He is not to use taekwondo on the children and he is never to touch Sun Moon. After she lays down the rules, he tells her of the first time he met her husband in person. When the real Ga returned to the mines a month later, Jun Do had killed him.

Part Two, Pages 240-267 Analysis

As more is learned about Ga, it becomes apparent that he was not a very nice person, especially to Sun Moon and her children. It appears that some of the reason that Sun



Moon is not given any more movie roles is because of the way that her husband has acted toward the Dear Leader. At one point, Sun Moon asks Jun Do when he comes to her pretending to be her husband that he be nice to the Dear Leader.

Notice also in this section that Sun Moon gives Jun Do/Ga specific instructions for him to follow while they are together. More of these instructions deal with the way that she wants him to interact with her children. First, she tells him that her children will only tell him their names when they are ready. This refusal to tell their names indicates that by not knowing the children's names, they will somehow remain separated from him. It is as if by knowing their names, it would give Jun Do some sort of control over the children. Sun Moon also tells Jun Do that he is not to be cruel to her children or use taekwondo on them.

It is also in this section of the novel that the reader finally learns the significance of the peaches. These peaches come from fruit factory 49, the one that became contaminated with botulism. Since he is the minister of procurement, Comrade Buc was able to get one of the cases of contaminated peaches. His family plans to use these peaches as a way to kill themselves in the case that they ever face the possibility of being put in jail. As he considers the new Commander Ga to be a friend, Buc gives Ga a can of these bad peaches for his family.



Part Two, Pages 268-305

Part Two, Pages 268-305 Summary

In this section, the narrator trades a Pubbyok badge for a charger for Ga's cellphone. He plays with the phone and wonders what making his first call will be like. As he contemplates Ga's ability to take on a new identity, the phone beeps. He has received a photo of Ingrid Bergman's star in Hollywood. When he searches Buc's file looking for a similar star, he notices an open can of peaches in the photo of Buc's dead family. It is at this point that he realizes the significance of the can of peaches on Ga's bedside table.

He goes to Division 42 and discovers Ga's peaches are gone. Ga tells him that they must find the peaches. He asks Ga how he got Sun Moon to love him and Ga explains intimacy. The story is interrupted when Q-Kee walks by headed for the basement. She has given Buc the peaches and has realized too late that they carried the botulism poison. The narrator searches the central property locker and finds Buc's peaches. He takes these peaches home.

In Ga's memories, Sun Moon's children help him find her cigarettes. The boy also points out a hiding place where Ga finds the laptop. Ga teaches Sun Moon's children how to work and how to snare birds. A messenger brings a new script for Sun Moon from the Dear Leader. Although she believes that the Dear Leader is trying to humiliate her, Ga tries to ensure her that the only thing on the Dear Leader's mind is humiliating the Americans. As they try to envision a different story line for the movie, a bird is caught in the children's trap. Ga shows them how to dress it.

The loudspeakers continue the story of Sun Moon and Ga. The family has a picnic in the Revolutionary Martyr's Cemetery. The story has Ga teaching the children about the martyrs and convincing Sun Moon that her mother is having too much fun in retirement to write to her. In this section the two spend time in a hothouse in which they share "political" ideals which are apparently veiled references to sex.

Next comes the real life story of the family's picnic in the park. Unlike the story told by the loudspeakers, Ga is the one who does the cooking, and the family takes Brando. As they wait for the food to be ready, Ga takes a photo of Sun Moon, the children and the dog. Ga promises to tell the children about their father. They find a starving family in the woods and offer them food. That night, Ga is scared as he realizes that in all the times that he has gone past Wonsan Beach, he has never seen any lounge chairs or old people. When he shares this with Sun Moon, she tells him that he is a thief who has stolen everything that mattered to him.

The next day Sun Moon is still angry. Buc asks Ga to tell about killing the real Ga. Ga has found pictures of the men that the real Ga had attacked sexually. Comrade Buc's picture is among these. Even though Buc says that Ga did not finish with him, there is still animosity toward the man. He tells Ga that he envies him for killing the real Ga.



That evening, Sun Moon tells Ga that she wants to see Casablanca. Although she is critical at the beginning of the movie, she is in tears at the conclusion. She tells Ga that he is an honorable man, like Rick. It is at this point that she asks him to help her get out of North Korea. She plans for him to come along also.

Part Two, Pages 268-305 Analysis

It is in this section of the novel that Ga tells Sun Moon that he had never seen any retirees on Wonsan Beach. Sun Moon is angry with Ga for telling her this because it has been a comfort to her believing that her mother was happily enjoying her later years. She is angry with Ga for taking away everything that was ever important to her. Part of Sun Moon's anger could come from her own realization that the Dear Leader has lied to her through her relationship with him. It is also in this portion of the novel that Sun Moon finally allows Ga to show her the American movie Casablanca. Although she had always been told that she would lose her purity as an actress if she watched movies other than her own, Sun Moon realizes that not watching other movies has also kept her from realizing how much she was missing as an actress.

Notice also in this section the narrator's interest in making a call on the cell phone. As he toys with the phone he tries to come up with the name of a person who he could call. He can think of no one to whom he would want to send a message. The narrator tries to involve his parents in his quest for someone to contact but they are too paranoid and fearful that their son is trying to trick them to play along with him.



Part Two, Pages 306-330

Part Two, Pages 306-330 Summary

In this section of the novel, the members of Division 42 inspect Buc and Ga's homes. They are able to find little clues to what might have happened to Sun Moon. They do find signs that indicate that Sun Moon had come to love the new Ga. In his evening session with Ga, the narrator asks Ga again how he got Sun Moon to love him.

In his memories, when Ga arrives at the fake Texas, Buc is waiting for him with his pair of cowboy boots. As Buc and Ga wait for the Dear Leader to come and inspect the fake Texas, Ga tells Buc his plans to sneak himself, Sun Moon and the kids to America. Buc suggests to Ga that he should stay in Korea and give Sun Moon and the kids a better chance to escape. This plan would also leave Ga in Korea to take the punishment. Buc agrees to help Ga, though, because Ga got rid of the real Ga. Pack drives up and directs Ga to join the Dear Leader at his office.

The Dear Leader tells Ga that the Americans have decided the trip will not be one for diplomacy but instead for exchange, the rower for the radiation detector. The exchange will take place on the airport runway. The Dear Leader also shows Ga a computer which he claims to be the master computer. Ga will only type in one name, his own. The Dear Leader laughs, but deletes the name. He then takes Ga to the girl rower's cell to translate for him. He believes the girl has grown attached to him, as he has grown attached to her. He compares his relationship with her with his relationship with Sun Moon. Although the Dear Leader believes that Ga is translating what he is saying, Ga is actually giving the girl instructions so that he can get a message to Wanda that he is sending Sun Moon and the kids to her. He takes photos of the girl on the phone that Wanda gave to him.

Part Two, Pages 306-330 Analysis

It is in this section of the novel that the narrator speaks of the parts of his department that he believes are "broken." For instance, the narrator believes that the autopilot is the perfect way to deal with Korean criminals. It cleans their minds of any prior memories without making them useless. He indicates that he had once been involved in performing lobotomies, what he now realizes was an imperfect fix to the problem. The narrator realizes what a lobotomy does to a person when he once visited a farm where people who'd had this procedure done lived and worked. He notices the people seem dazed, often doing the same tasks over and over, and often don't even adhere to accepted good manners. The narrator hopes that he will be able to fix this broken system. He is encouraged when the use of lobotomies is stopped, but still frustrated by the violence used in his department.



Also in this portion of the novel, the reader learns that much of the friction between the Dear Leader and Commander Ga came from Ga's act of taking Sun Moon away from the Dear Leader. The new Ga, however, seems to be on the Dear Leader's side as he helps him make plans to embarrass the Americans when they come to visit Korea. The Dear Leader does not know that while Ga appears to be helping him, he is also setting things up to help ensure that Sun Moon and her children will be able to escape and find refuge in America.



Part Two, Pages 331-362

Part Two, Pages 331-362 Summary

In this section, the narrator gets a photo on Ga's phone of a Korean boy and girl wearing Mickey Mouse ears. He also continues to check his parents for signs of vision. He asks them if they had another family before him. They answer him in riddles.

Ga speaks with Sun Moon about the possibility that the girl rower would develop feelings for the Dear Leader. When Sun Moon suggests this might be possible, it seems she might have had some experience in that situation.

On the next loudspeaker installment of the Best North Korean story, a crow is flying, looking for traitors. The crow has spotted Ga tossing coins to the orphans, a forbidden activity in North Korea. The crow realizes the man and the woman with whom he is walking are making plans, another forbidden activity. The crow recognizes the man as Ga. At that moment a black Mercedes comes to pick up Sun Moon. It takes Sun Moon to the Dear Leader. He gives her a guitar and encourages her to try to play it even though she says she can get no good sound from it. He brings up the girl rower, and Sun Moon asks if she is worthy of him. He produces the soap, comb and gold choson-ot and tells her that he wants her to find out. Sun Moon talks to the girl as she bathes her. Although Sun Moon cannot understand the girl's responses, they are understood by the loudspeaker people to be sadness about her upcoming departure from North Korea.

The next day at Division 42, the narrator finds Q-Kee's hair in the Pubyok lounge. Q-Kee tells the narrator that she has voluntarily transferred to the Pubyok. She gives him a map of the fake Texas that she found in Ga's boots. Sarge comes in as the narrator is studying the map. Sarge tells him that the leaders, the people who were there when the Americans visited, know what happened to Sun Moon. The narrator wonders why the people don't just tell the story. Before Sarge leaves he warns the narrator not to go near the fake Texas with a storm coming. The narrator, however, gathers Q-Kee and Jujack to head for that space. They are unable to find the actress' body.

As soon as they return to Division 42, Q-Kee warns Sarge that Jujack knows something but is holding out on them. Jujack is taken away by the Pubyok. The narrator hopes Ga can tell him something that might save Jujack. It is only when the narrator shows him the pictures on the phone, that Ga tells him they moved the fake Texas to the airport. On his way to the Pubyok, he meets Q-Kee says that Jujack told them the actress disappeared from the airport. She will not tell him what happened to Jujack, but breaks her hand against the doorpost as the other Pubyok watch.

Part Two, Pages 331-362 Analysis

One of the most interesting parts of this section of the novel is Ga's discussion with Sun Moon about the possibility that the American rower has developed feelings for the Dear



Leader. Sun Moon answers Ga as if she has some sort of experience in this situation. One must wonder if it was the Dear Leader whom she considered her captor. Like the American rower, Sun Moon might have been unhappy with her situation with the Dear Leader until he granted her roles in movies and told her pleasant lies to make her trust and like him.

This portion of the novel is extremely unnerving to the narrator as his female assistant, in whom he'd had high hopes, defects to the Pubyok. Q-Kee also alerts Sarge, the leader of the Pubyok when she believes that Jujack is hiding something from them. Due to Q-Kee's actions, the narrator loses both his interns at one time. It is especially upsetting to the narrator when Sarge turns his beliefs that Q-Kee was the future of Division 42 against him.



Part Two, Pages 363-386

Part Two, Pages 363-386 Summary

Sun Moon is restless the day before the Americans are expected to arrive. After the children are in bed, Ga and Sun Moon stand on the balcony together. They see a car driving to the house. She tells Ga that the only person who has really known her is coming in the car for her. The Dear Leader wants Sun Moon back. Ga feels as if he is being pulled apart.

He goes to Buc's house hoping to find the answers to some questions. He finds only Buc's wife who is sewing a white dress. Back at Sun Moon's house, he tries to tell the children the truth about their father, but doesn't want to hurt them, or go against their mother's wishes. As Ga tells them another story, the boy says that he wants to tell his name but Ga stops him. He tells the children not to remember someone by their name, but instead to put the image of their face on their heart.

The loudspeaker version of Sun Moon's story describes the Dear Leader's car taking her to the airport. He shows what is planned for the following day. He tempts her with tickets to a showing of her movie that she believed had been cancelled. He tells her of another movie in which she will play the part of the first woman in the Pubyok. She asks that her mother be allowed to come to the premiere. He promises that she will be there. He tells her that he wants her back. She agrees to his desires. She asks only that the Dear Leader let nothing bad happen to Ga as he has a good heart.

Part Two, Pages 363-386 Analysis

The picture of Comrade Buc's wife sewing a white dress is a powerful image as it is known that she dressed all of her children in these white dresses for their death. While the woman had hoped that her life would be a chain of unworn white dresses, the family, unfortunately, has to use their suicide plan. This image represents the desperation with which this one mother tries to protect the innocence of her children from the cruelty of the North Korean government. Although she could have ignored the possibility of jail and separation, she is instead prepared for it, and continues to see it as a real threat that could come to their family at any time. It is in this portrait that the true sadness and desperation of the people of North Korea is caught.

Also in this section of the novel, Ga tells Sun Moon's children not to feel as if they know anyone just because they have their name. He suggests to them that a name is not a proper way to remember someone. He suggests that they should tattoo that person's memory on their hearts so that no one can ever take that person away. The imagery here is similar to the tattoo of Sun Moon that Ga has over his chest. This image, he believes, is lasting and can never be taken away.



Part Two, Pages 387-412

Part Two, Pages 387-412 Summary

Commander Ga is awake until Sun Moon returns. When she does come back, she tells her husband how the former Commander Ga and Commander Park had plotted against the Dear Leader. She tells him about the sister she lost to sickness, and that the first time the Dear Leader heard her singing, it was to her mother. They were headed to a redeemability camp, considered the family of a defector. The Dear Leader heard her singing when his train passed the one on which her family was riding. Sun Moon also tells Ga that she plans to recreate her grandmother's songs in America but her song will tell the truth about the Dear Leader. Sun Moon tells him that she has never sung a song for pleasure before. He teaches her The Yellow Rose of Texas. Sun Moon allows him to be intimate with her.

After he loses his team, the narrator stays away from Division 42 but can't remember what he did during that time or for how long he was gone. When he does return, Sarge offers him a Pubyok badge, the narrator takes it but says that he must finish Ga's case. Sarge shows him a branding iron, the one made for the fake Texas. He tells him a plan has been made to brand Ga with the iron at dawn in the soccer stadium. Sarge also tells the narrator that Commander Park had been there because the Dear Leader had wanted an image to remind him of Sun Moon.

When the narrator gets to Ga, he finds that Park has cut the tattoo of Sun Moon from Ga's chest. Sarge joins the narrator, telling him that Ga is ready to tell the truth. He tells the narrator that he wants him to get the truth from Ga. When Sarge leaves, the narrator promises Ga that he will not let them brand him as they are planning. As he goes home, the narrator imagines that everyone he sees has the brand on them. At home, he feeds his parents Commander Buc's can of peaches. He tells them that he has learned the secret of true love from a new friend. When he mentions Commander Ga, his parents tell him that Ga is an enemy of the state. They have heard it on the loudspeakers, they say. The narrator doesn't see how the story is being told as he hasn't even finished it yet. He is so angry that he tears the loudspeaker from the wall.

The narrator barter's his Pubyok badge for iodine and a bandage for Ga's wound. He asks Ga if he feels able to go on a journey with him. He takes him to the autopilot and straps him up. Ga tells him there is no mystery about what happened to Sun Moon. He explains that she simply defected. He asks the narrator who he thought the pictures were of that came on the cell phone. The narrator offers Ga a pen to write his name on himself so that he will be able to remember who he is but Ga declines. He says Sun Moon will meet him and remind him who he is. The narrator believes that Ga has made himself believe the lie that the actress is still alive. The narrator leaves Ga's straps loose but does strap him in so that those that find them will know that the narrator was in charge. As the machines start to work, the narrator notices that Ga reaches over and turns up his power to maximum.



Part Two, Pages 387-412 Analysis

In this section, Ga learns that his tattoo was not as permanent as he had thought it was. Commander Park has used a box cutter to remove the image of Sun Moon from his chest. Along these lines, however, the narrator also realizes that everyone that he meets has been branded by the government of North Korea. Although these brands aren't physical brands, the narrator imagines the words on every person whom he meets. He believes this idea that whether they accept it or not, everyone belongs to the government, is the ultimate perversion of communist dream that he'd been taught and had grown up believing was true. It is at this point that he realizes the truth about the power and ruthlessness of the government of North Korea.

Back at this apartment, the narrator tries to tell his parents that he has learned the secret of true love from a new friend. As he feeds them the peaches that will kill them, he tells his parents all about himself, things that he has never told them before. After he finishes telling his parents his story, he feels that he has been intimate with other human beings for the first time.



Part Two, Pages 413-444

Part Two, Pages 413-444 Summary

Ga is awake until Sun Moon returns. When she comes back, she tells her him how the former Ga and Park plotted against the Dear Leader. She tells him about the sister she lost to sickness, and that the first time the Dear Leader heard her singing, it was to her mother. They were headed to a redeemability camp, considered the family of a defector. The Dear Leader heard her singing when his train passed the one on which her family was riding. Sun Moon also tells Ga that she plans to recreate her grandmother's songs in America but her song will tell the truth about the Dear Leader. Sun Moon tells him that she has never sung a song for pleasure before. He teaches her The Yellow Rose of Texas. Sun Moon allows him to be intimate with her.

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Part Two, Pages 413-444 Analysis

The final section of the novel tells the story of the fiasco that is Sun Moon's escape from North Korea. Although the American Senator makes it clear that he does not want to



take part in any diplomacy and that the time for joviality is over, the Dear Leader is determined to make a spectacle of the visit. It is in the chaos that ensues from the show that the Dear Leader has planned for the Americans that Sun Moon is able to escape. Unfortunately, the dog, Brando, is sacrificed in order to keep Commander Park from discovering the woman and her children are stowed away in the barrels meant for food. Buc and Ga are both taken prisoners by the Koreans after Sun Moon's disappearance.

The loudspeakers, however, tell a greatly romanticized version Sun Moon's escape. In this story, Sun Moon is kidnapped and goes with the Americans against her will. Ga is made out to be a hero as he rides on the wing of the plane in an attempt to get Sun Moon back. Unfortunately, however, these loudspeaker accounts make Buc out to be the villain in the kidnapping as he is described as sitting idly by and doing nothing to try to help Sun Moon.



Characters

Pak Jun Do

Pak Jun Do could be considered both the hero and main character of this novel. The story follows Jun Do's life as he is first manipulated by the Korean government then uses a unique opportunity to manipulate the government. Jun Do is raised by his father who takes a position as the master of an orphanage after his wife disappears. It is believed that Jun Do's mother was either been kidnapped by the government or has run away. Jun Do is given much responsibility in the orphanage. He decides where the orphans sleep, leaving some to get sick in cold sleeping quarters. He also decides which ones get the best food and which ones go hungry. Jun Do is also responsible for sending orphans on work details where they can easily be killed.

When the famine becomes severe in Jun Do's hometown of Chongjin, Jun Do's father sends Jun Do and all of the orphans to the Army. Jun Do is given the job of a tunnel soldier where he meets Officer So who takes him as part of his kidnapping crew. It is during this job that Jun Do begins to realize the terrible things that he has done. One of the victims, a woman, is killed when Jun Do and Gil push her off a pier even though she tries to tell them that she cannot swim. In the eyes of the Japanese soprano singer Rumina that Jun Do sees contempt. He feels as if the woman can see all of the terrible things that he has ever done. Kidnapping Rumina also make him think of the way that his mother might have been kidnapped and taken off.

Jun Do next works as a spy on a Korean fishing vessel. It is his job to transcribe all of the radio transmissions coming from the other boats. When one of the mates on the boat defects, Jun Do allows himself to be mauled by sharks so that the others on the ship will be spared from going to prison. The government of Korea decides to use Jun Do's story to convince Americans to stop boarding and inspecting Korean ships. They believe that the Americans will believe Jun Do and that his story will influence them. Instead, the Americans are angry because they believe they have been tricked when they see the tattoo of Sun Moon on Jun Do's chest. They believe that he is a powerful minister instead of just being a simple citizen. For this reason, they refuse to go along with Korea's requests. When Jun Do returns from America, he is taken to Prison 33, a work camp where he is incarcerated.

One year later, Jun Do resurfaces after he kills Commander Ga in the tunnels of the prison mine. Since he has Sun Moon tattooed on his chest, it is easy enough for Jun Do to pretend to be Ga. His identity is not questioned because the Dear Leader has need of Jun Do/Ga's knowledge of America. He employs Ga to help him lure the Americans to Korea, using a female rower they have captured as bait, and embarrass the Americans in the same way that he feels the Americans embarrassed his people. Unknown to the Dear Leader, Jun Do/Ga is planning his own secret mission to embarrass the Dear Leader. Jun Do/Ga arranges for Sun Moon and her two children to be stowaways on the plane carrying the Americans so that they can be free.



Jun Do became interested in Sun Moon when the captain of the Junma gave him a tattoo of Sun Moon on his chest as the other sailors had tattoos of their wives on their chests. When Jun Do is in Prison 33 he first sees Sun Moon act in a movie. It is at this point that she becomes a pain reserve for him. When he kills Ga and escapes jail, he interacts with Sun Moon and her children in a way that they had never experienced from the real Commander Ga. Sun Moon, and even the children, grow to love Jun Do/Ga.

Jun Do/Ga is immediately taken to Division 42 where he is beaten by the Pubyok and also questioned by an interrogator in an attempt to find Sun Moon and her children. Although Jun Do/Ga tells his interrogator that Sun Moon and her children are in America, the interrogator will not believe him. It is believed that Jun Do/Ga killed the actress and her children. At the end of the novel, the narrator puts Jun Do/Ga on the autopilot. Jun Do/Ga gets one hand free of his restraints and turns his machine up to a lethal dose.

Dear Leader Kim Jong Il

The Dear Leader Kim Jong Il is the leader of North Korea. The Dear Leader makes himself the center of the lives of the Korean people. Anything that defers the people's emotions from the Dear Leader is considered to be dangerous. For instance, most all songs in Korea are about him or the supremacy of North Korea. It is the Dear Leader who "discovers" Sun Moon and makes her the national actress when she is only sixteen. Jun Do learns later from Sun Moon that the Dear Leader found her as she was singing to her mother as they were on a train on their way to a redeemability camp. Although Sun Moon had begged the Dear Leader to make sure that her mother was all right, the Dear Leader's train took her away without her mother.

For many years, the Dear Leader would not allow Sun Moon to marry. He kept her as his special jewel until Commander Ga won the Golden Belt in taekwondo. Because of his accomplishment, Ga is allowed a reward and he chooses Sun Moon. After Sun Moon's marriage to Ga, the Dear Leader punishes her by refusing to give her any more movie roles. He chooses a new darling, an opera singer, with whom he tries to replace Sun Moon. The Dear Leader also tries to use the girl rower, who was rescued by the Koreans, as a replacement for Sun Moon. It is because Ga took Sun Moon away from him that the two become enemies. After the real Ga is killed and Jun Do takes his place, the Dear Leader tries to reignite his relationship with Sun Moon. He promises her roles in several movies but even this is not enough to keep her from defecting.

Although the Dear Leader knows that Jun Do is not the real Ga, he does not put an end to the charade. He apparently believes that Jun Do's act of pretending to be Ga will be useful to him later. Because the Dear Leader does not dispute Ga, no one else does either. It becomes obvious as the novel progresses that the Dear Leader knows all about the imposter Ga. He has learned that the man escaped from prison where he killed the real Ga. He has also become familiar with the way that the camera that Ga carries works. This is shown when the Dear Leader takes a picture of the rower girl and the data goes directly to the phone that Wanda carries. Although the Dear Leader may



also have known about Sun Moon's plan to defect, he does not do anything to stop her defection.

The Narrator aka Interrogator Number 6

The narrator is a character who appears only in the second part of this novel. It is learned that his identification at Division 42, where he works, is Interrogator Number 6. The narrator is never given a name. Although the narrator is in charge of writing biographies for the people who come through Division 42, the narrator has never been able to write his own biography. He hates the word "I," preferring "we" as it is the pronoun encouraged by the Korean government.

The narrator is intrigued by Ga because he believes by being able to discover and write his biography, he will finally get the big break that he has been waiting for at work. The narrator wants Division 42 to be a place where people are not beaten for their confessions but instead are convinced to confess through sharp thinking. The narrator is also intrigued by Ga because he sees the similarities between the two of them. The narrator longs for the love of a wife, similar to that Ga says that he has found with Sun Moon. Instead, the narrator still lives with his parents. They never bothered to find a wife for him, but have allowed him to remain single.

The narrator and Jun Do/Ga are also similar because they both started out their lives believing they were innocent and doing right by serving their country in the way they were asked. Jun Do had never believed that he would be thrown into prison as others had before him until he is taken to Prison 33. He believes that as a national hero that he was immune to being put in jail. Similarly, the narrator believes that he is an irreplaceable part of interrogation service. When Jujack is taken into custody and Q-Kee becomes a member of the Pubyok, the narrator realizes that his job is not prized as much as he believed that it was.

At the conclusion of the novel, the narrator helps Ga escape the embarrassment of being branded by the Korean Government by hooking him up to the autopilot. The narrator also hooks himself up to the autopilot in the hopes that he will be sent to a work commune where he can live a quiet life with a loving wife.

Sun Moon

Sun Moon is Korea's national actress. She was "discovered" by the Dear Leader when he heard her singing to her mother when they were locked in separate train cars on the way to a redeemability camp when she was 16. Although she begs the Dear Leader to take care of her mother, she later learns that this probably did not happen. The Dear Leader has movies written for Sun Moon and keeps her busy acting for him until Commander Ga wins the Golden Belt in Taekwondo. This award allows Ga to be able to choose any reward he would like. He decides that he wants Sun Moon for his wife. Ga had apparently made many promises to Sun Moon to get her to marry him, none of which



he followed through with. While married to him Sun Moon becomes sad and melancholy. The Dear Leader will also no longer give her any roles in movies.

When Jun Do/Ga gets to know Sun Moon, he learns that she is actually the daughter of a zinc miner from Huchang. She knows what it is like to be poor. This is why she becomes so angry with Jun Do/Ga when he forces her to eat a flower to show to her what hunger is like. He later learns that she has received a notch in one of her ears as a result of some crime that she committed before she was taken over by the Dear Leader. It might be because of this defect that Sun Moon believes that she cannot play the part in the movie about the female interrogator. In order to fill the role, Sun Moon would have to cut her hair short, which would allow the mark to show.

Even though she does not want to at first, she allows Jun Do/Ga to show her the American movie *Casablanca*. Although she is critical through the first parts of the movie, she soon realizes how much better the movie is than the ones in which she had acted. Up to this point she had believed that not watching other movies kept her a "pure" actress but when she does watch the American film, she realizes what her movies are missing. It is after watching this movie that she tells Jun Do/Ga that she wants to leave North Korea.

Commander Ga Chol Chun

Commander Ga Chol Chun is never an active member in the novel. He is only spoken about by other characters. It can be gathered that Ga was a very cruel person who promised Sun Moon a happy life in order to lure her away from the Dear Leader. Once he had Sun Moon for himself, Ga apparently was cruel to both her and her children. Ga was allowed to have Sun Moon only because he won the golden belt in taekwondo. For his win, he was given the title of Minister of Prison Mines as well as a choice of any other reward he wanted. It was because he was the prison minister that Ga happens to come in contact with Jun Do in the mine tunnels of Prison 33.

Although Ga is touted as a hero who cleared the homosexuals out of the military, it appears that Ga was a homosexual. Comrade Buc speaks to Jun Do/Ga of a time when Ga "man attacked" him which leads one to believe the attack was of a sexual nature especially since Buc says he had flashbacks of the experience every time he attempted to lay with his wife. Jun Do also tells Sun Moon that before he killed Ga, Ga had tried to attack him. Although it first may seem that Ga tried to use taekwondo on Jun Do, it later appears that this may also have been a sexual attack. Commander Ga's manhood also comes under question when a vial of testosterone and syringes is found in a hiding spot in his house. When the interrogators are searching the house in which Sun Moon and Ga lived, one of the interrogators looks for condoms under the bedside table on Sun Moon's side of the bed. It is mentioned, however, that Ga had no need for condoms indicating that he might have been infertile.



Wanda

Wanda is one of the women who travels with the Senator from Texas. She seems to take a special interest in Jun Do. She appears to be some sort of security officer who works for the United States government. It is Wanda who suspects that Jun Do is muddling translations. She takes an opportunity to speak to him privately to try to determine why he is doing so. Wanda tries to find information about the Second Mate for Jun Do but is unable to find anything. It is also to Wanda that Jun Do gives his list of people kidnapped from other countries and taken to North Korea. Wanda also uses Jun Do's tattoo to incorrectly identify him as Commander Ga. Wanda at first suspects that Jun Do wants to defect from Korea and tells him that although it would cause problems, it could be done. While they watch the International Space Station pass overhead, Wanda asks Jun Do if he feels free. She gives him a camera which can take pictures that will be sent in turn to a cell phone that she carries. Wanda also accompanies the Senator when the group visits North Korea. After Sun Moon sings her song, Wanda notices the strange effect that it has on the Dear Leader and asks Ga what the song was about.

The Captain

The Captain is the captain of the fishing boat the Junma. The Captain is the one who give Jun Do his tattoo of Sun Moon. In a way, the Captain serves as a sort of father figure for Jun Do as he teaches him about the real interests of the Korean government. The Captain teaches Jun Do that the leaders of Korea are more interested in the story they will tell about any given incident and that they don't really care about the people involved. He also teaches Jun Do about the Koreans' twisted idea of loyalty as he forces Jun Do to take a shark bite in order to cover up the fact that the Second Mate had defected.

Before Jun Do meets the Captain, the Captain had already served four years in jail. While he was in jail, he lost his wife. When Jun Do is declared a hero and is told he can request favors, the Captain hints that he would like Jun Do to get his wife back for him. Although Jun Do wants to be put back on the Captain's boat after he heals from his shark bite, the Captain requests that Jun Do be put on a different ship. Jun Do later meets the Captain again while they are both in prison. The Captain is being stoned because he fought back against the prison wardens and wouldn't let them have his identity.

Allison Jensen aka Rower Girl

Allison Jensen is one of the American girls who attempts to row around the world. Allison is the rower whom Jun Do picks up transmissions from as she rows during the nighttime hours. Allison is in the habit of rowing with her eyes closed and apparently gets off course. Jun Do hears her transmission where she calls for help saying that their navigational devices are malfunctioning. Allison tells Jun Do that a Korean captain



picked her up but shot the girl who was her partner. He also set the boat on fire making it appear as if Allison had been the one who had harmed her companion since the other girl's blood was in the boat but there was no sign of Allison. Allison is taken to the Dear Leader where he locks her in a deep basement prison and forces her to hand copy the manuscript of his book. The Dear Leader seems to see Allison as a replacement for Sun Moon. When the Americans realize that Korea is holding their citizen and request that she be given back to them, it is Sun Moon that the Dear Leader assigns to the task of getting the girl prepared for going back to the United States.

Comrade Buc

Comrade Buc is Korea's Minister of Procurement. He goes with the Korean delegation to the United States but does not attend the talks in Texas. For this reason, he is not jailed like the others are when they return to Korea. During this trip, Jun Do learns that Buc is Sun Moon's next-door neighbor. It is Buc who tells Jun Do how sad Sun Moon is. Jun Do asks Buc to get the puppy given to him by the Americans to Sun Moon.

Later, when Jun Do re-emerges as Ga, the two become friends. Buc tells Jun Do/Ga that the real Ga had been attacked and then gone on living next door. Because Jun Do killed the real Ga, Buc agrees to help Jun do get Sun Moon and her children out of Korea. Buc tries to get Jun Do/Ga to agree that Jun Do will take the blame for Sun Moon's defection. After she disappears, however, Buc is also taken to Division 42 where he is left to the mercy of the Pubyok. Buc, however, promises Q-Kee that if she will let him eat his can of peaches, he will answer her questions. The peaches are poisoned with botulism and Buc dies before Q-Kee can ask him anything.

The Senator

The Senator is a Texan whom Jun Do guesses is about 70 years of age. The Senator is never given a first or last name. It is with the Senator that Dr. Song plans to talk to halt the Americans' practice of boarding and inspecting Korean fishing vessels. The talks go badly, however, as the Senator learns that he is speaking with people who really have no power in Korea at all. He incorrectly believes that it is Jun Do who is the one with power and addresses him personally on the way back to the airport. He is angry because of the way the Koreans have treated him with so little respect and he refuses to order that American troops stop boarding North Korean ships. He also tells Jun Do that he will not give the Dear Leader back his radiation detector.

The Senator is lured to North Korea to hand over the uranium detector the Koreans had stolen from the Japanese in exchange for the American girl that the Koreans are holding hostage. During the visit, the Senator is very businesslike and demands that they take care of the business at hand with little ceremony and frivolity.



The Senator's Wife

The Senator's wife is one of the hostesses who serves the Korean representatives when they visit Texas. She is never given a first name. Jun Do gets to know the Senator's wife when she removes his stitches. She is compassionate and intelligent. She does not buy Jun Do's story about the shark attack, but does believe that Sun Moon is his wife. She gives Jun Do a puppy to take back to Sun Moon in the hopes that it will be a comfort to Sun Moon. When she first learns of Sun Moon's unhappiness, she tries to contact the woman by phone, but is unable to do so. As she is removing his stitches, the Senator's wife offers to give Jun Do a full medical examination but Jun Do refuses. She also offers Jun Do a Bible, which he also refuses. When Jun Do sends Sun Moon and her children to America, he does so with the belief that the Senator's wife will help the three of them when they first arrive in America.

Sarge

Sarge is the leader of the Pubyok. He is in his seventies. It is Sarge who first declares that their newest prisoner is impersonating Commander Ga. Sarge and the narrator of the second portion of the novel are archenemies. Sarge uses the halo on the Commander Ga impersonator but is unable to get a confession from him. Sarge believes the Korean leaders' claim that retired workers go to Wonson. He is visibly disturbed when Commander Ga refuses to take back the story he's told the Duc Dan, a retired interrogator, was in Prison 33 with him. The narrator of the second part of the novel believes that if he is able to uncover the true identity of the man impersonating Commander Ga, he will be able to take over Sarge's position in the interrogation division.

Second Mate

The Second Mate is the member of the Junma crew who connects most closely with Jun Do. He defects from Korea using the lifeboat that is supplied to the crew after the boat is boarded by Americans. Jun Do had kept the Second Mate from attacking the Americans with a knife. The story that the crew of the boat make up about what happened leads to the Second Mate being declared a hero. Before he can be declared a hero, though, the Second Mate is beaten by members of the Pubyok to ensure that his story checks out. As he is defecting, the man tells Jun Do that he is the one responsible for helping him realize that they are the ones at the bottom of the ocean, where nothing happens. Jun do later tries to find out what happened to the Second Mate, if he actually arrived in America, but is not able to find anything out.

Mongnan

Mongnan is the woman who takes the intake and release photos of all the people at Prison 33. She takes Jun Do under her wing and helps him to survive his time in the



prison by not only suggesting that he get the clothing that he needs as well as teaching how to get food to keep himself from starving. It is Mongnan who refers to the loud-mouthed patient at the prison as Duc Dan. When the people in Division 42 suggest that they could use Mongnan to get the truth out of their Commander Ga imposter, the man tells them that Mongnan is dead. The interrogators from Division 42 also recognize Mongnan as Li Mongnan, a professor who was denounced along with her students. Jun Do credits Mongnan with saving his life at least twice while he was in prison.

Dr. Song

Dr. Song is one of the men who goes with Jun Do to Texas. He appears to be the one in charge of the mission. He tells Jun Do that he was originally a war orphan. He is described as being small and older. It is Dr. Song who explains to Jun Do that in Korea, the story matters more than the person. In America though, Dr. Song tells Jun Do that they people will believe him, the person, even though the story may seem improbable. Dr. Song brags about being the exact dimensions as the Dear Leader. Dr. Song has outlasted all of his colleagues whom he has seen taken to mining camps and farming communes. After the mission to Texas, however, Dr. Song is apparently sent to a prison or mining camp.

Kim Duc Dan

Kim Duc Dan is the prisoner in the infirmary who moans and makes noise, asking what his crime has been and claiming he has been a model citizen. It is Mongnan who identifies the man as Duc Dan. Jun Do later learns that Duc Dan had been an interrogator with the Pubyok. They believe that he has gone to the beach in Wonsan to retire. After Sarge has used the halo on Jun Do, he is disturbed because it didn't matter how much electricity they had applied to his brain, he refused to admit his claims about Dun Dan were lies.

Jujack

Jujack is an intern in Division 42 who works under the man who narrates portions of the second section of the novel. Jujack is the son of a minister, he is described as a good intern. Jujack is sent to search Commander Buc's home in hopes of finding clues to Commander Ga's true identity. When Q-Kee transitions to Pubyok, she tells Sarge that she believes that Jujack is hiding information about Commander Ga's identity from them. Jujack is tormented by the Pubyok even though the narrator tries to save him from the torture. It is never known what happens to Jujack.

Commander Park

Sun Moon tells Ga that Commander Park is his best friend after the man gives him a vicious punch as a greeting at the state dinner. Commander Park is the man who cuts



the tattoo from Ga at the Dear Leader's request for a final memento of her. It is during the Dear Leader's celebration for the Americans that Ga orders the dog, Brando, to attack Park. Although Park pretends to be loyal to the Dear Leader, Park and the former Ga had, in reality, been plotting against the Dear Leader.

The Narrator's Mother and Father

The narrator's mother and father live with him in his twenty-second story apartment. They both have failing vision though the narrator suspects their loss of vision might be pretended. Both his parents are paranoid and extremely careful to say nothing that will cause them to be arrested by the Korean government. Before the narrator takes his own life with the autopilot, he feeds his parents a can of peaches infected with botulism so that he will know that they will not be sent to prisons or work camps.

Officer So

Officer So finds Jun do where he is working in the tunnels with the Army and takes him as part of his kidnapping team. Officer So is in charge of heading up the team that has been assigned to kidnap Rumina, the soprano opera star, from Japan. Officer So seems to be completely unaffected by the people who he kidnaps and hurts. He tells Jun Do that he has lost count of the number of people that he has kidnapped, an idea that Jun Do comes to find disgraceful.

The Orphan Master

The orphan master is the only name that is ever given to Jun Do's father. His father took over the orphanage Long Tomorrows so that he could keep his son with him. Jun Do remembers that his father was in mourning for Jun Do's mother, who either ran away or was kidnapped. Because Jun Do is the Orphan Master's son, he is treated worse than the other orphans by his father. Jun Do believes this may be because Jun Do reminds him of his mother.

Older Man with Flattop and Busted Hands

This man is waiting at the dock when the Junma returns to port after its encounter with the American interceptor. He takes the Second Mate off for questioning. When the Junma returns to port after Jun Do is bitten by the shark, this man is waiting to question him. As he is questioning Jun Do about his experience with the shark, the man brutally beats him. It is later learned that the man is a member of the Pubyok, a group of interrogators who believe the use of violence is the only way to get the truth out of a person.



Rumina

Rumina is a soprano from the Tokyo Opera whom Officer So and his team are sent to kidnap for the Dear Leader. It is assumed that Rumina is the opera singer who is introduced to the people in the prologue of the novel. In this section she is referred to only as "the lovely visitor." Jun Do is able to tell that Rumina is married and has at least one child because she has a scar on her abdomen. He also believes that Rumina is aware of all of the cruel things that he has ever done in his life.

Mayumi

Mayumi is the Japanese woman whom Jun Do and Gil push off a pier. They believe that she is a man when they first see her. When they discover that she is a woman, they continue with their plan. Even though she screams out that she cannot swim, the two still push her. She is the only person whom Jun Do knows that has died during their kidnapping attempts.

Q-Kee

Q-Kee is one of the interns in Division 42 under the man who serves as the narrator of the second portion of the novel. She is the first woman who has ever worked in the interrogation division. Q-Kee leaves the narrator's portion of the interrogation division and joins the Pubyok. Q-Kee In the movie that the Dear Leader has planned for Sun Moon, she will play the role of Q-Kee.

Lieutenant Harlan Jervis

Lieutenant Harlan Jervis is one of the American officers who boards the Junma from the interceptor. He does not believe that the Koreans are spies because their boat is in such bad shape and its equipment so out of date. Jervis arranges for the Korean boat to be given a fire extinguisher and life raft. Before he leaves the Junma, Jervis gives Jun Do his military card. Jun Do later gives this card to Wanda while he is in Texas.

Brando

Brando is a Catahoula whom the Senator's wife asks Jun Do to get to Sun Moon. Although dogs are not legal in North Korea, Comrade Buc gets the dog to Sun Moon. She and the children raise the puppy and keep it hidden. When the Americans come to visit North Korea, it is Brando who savagely bites Commander Pack.



Jun Do's Mother

Jun Do's mother is never given a name or a title. Jun Do always wonders what might have happened to her but he is never able to find out. He suspects that she either ran away or that she was kidnapped. It is at the end of the novel that Jun Do realizes that she might have actually left him in an attempt to save him instead of in an attempt to abandon him.

Bo Song

Bo Song is a deaf orphan who was at Long Tomorrows with Jun Do. This boy is swept away when he tries to rescue a woman from a flood. Jun Do later has a dream that the boy is trying to tell him something. He is only able to begin to understand the boy when he wakes up.

Ryoktosan

Ryoktosan is the famed fighting king of Japan who was born in South Hamgyong in North Korea. Ryoktosan was stolen by the Japanese from Korea when he tried to return home and was murdered, according to the legend. The driver who attacks Ga during the state dinner is dressed up as Ryoktosan.

Dak-Ho

Dak-Ho runs the Central Cinema Studio and also sings tenor. He is the state movie producer and does all of the voice-overs for Sun Moon's movies. He is enlisted to use props from the studio to help create the fake Texas. Dak-Ho is also one of the men who drives a forklift of food to the American plane when it arrives.

Tommy

Tommy is a black man who has been a friend of the Senator since their Army days. Tommy speaks Korean. He is one of the men who helps to entertain the Korean visitors. Tommy also travels to Korea with the Senator to bring home the girl rower.

Kimsan

Kimsan was Jun Do's pain mentor in the military. The man advised Jun Do to never allow his pain to push him into the darkness. It is from Kimsan that Jun Do learns the pain avoidance techniques that he uses to survive his times of torture and loneliness.



Gil

Gil is minister's son who is assigned to work with Officer So in an attempt to toughen him up. Gil works as the translator for the group. Instead of becoming tougher, though, Gill tries to defect. He tells Jun Do that he does not want to wind up like Officer So.

Pak

Pak is the ROK officer who boards the Junma and requests the ship's manifest and registration and Captain's license. He is also the one who insists that Jun Do be the one to empty the ship's nets.

Pilar

Pilar is a Mexican woman who serves the Senator and his wife as a maid. She helps the Senator's wife remove Jun Do's stitches.

The Minister

The Minister who goes with the men to Texas. He is not really a minister but instead Dr. Song's driver. He is taken only as a ruse to the Americans.



Objects/Places

Democratic People's Republic of Korea

The Democratic People's Republic of Korea is the country where the majority of the story takes place.

Pyongyang

Pyongyang is the capital of Korea. It is to where all the pretty girls in the country, and other countries, and kidnapped and taken.

Long Tomorrows

Long Tomorrows is the name of the orphanage where Jun Do's father becomes orphan master after his wife disappears.

The Loudspeakers

Each home and business in Korea is outfitted with mandatory loudspeakers. These speakers broadcast Korean news and propaganda all day long.

Chongjin

Chongjin is the town in which Long Tomorrows, the orphanage at which Jun Do's father was master, was located.

The Roster of the 114 Grand Martyrs of the Revolution

When Jun Do returns to the abandoned Long Tomorrows, all that is left is the roster of the 114 grand martyrs of the revolution. Jun Do had used this roster to rename all of the boys who stayed at the orphanage.

Niigata

Niigata is the city in Japan from which Jun Do, Gil and Officer So kidnap Rumina.



Junma

The Junma is the name of the fishing vessel on which Jun Do was placed as a listening officer.

Athletic Shoes

The crew of the Junma collects hundreds of Nike athletic shoes they find floating on the ocean as they are trying to fish for fresh shrimp.

The Captain's Hat

It is when the American naval officers take the captain's hat from the Junma's pilothouse that the Second Mate has had enough and pulls his knife on the Americans.

Shrimp

It is while the fishermen of the Junma are casting for fresh shrimp that they are boarded by officers from the USS Fortitude.

USS Fortitude

The USS Fortitude is the American interceptor that comes in contact with the Junma while its crew is fishing for shrimp.

The Canning Master's House

The canning master's house is where Jun Do lives when he is not out on the Junma. It is indicated no one else wanted to live in the house because of what happened to the family but it is never specified what happened. It is in this house that Jun Do is putting together his own radio that will transmit messages.

Intelligence Officer

Jun Do is assigned as an intelligence officer on the Junma.

Ilyushin

It is an Ilyushin on which Jun Do, Commander Buc, Dr. Song and the Minister fly on to meet with the Texas senator.



Texas

The United States state of Texas is where the Koreans meet with the senator to discuss topics including the Koreans desire for the Americans to stop boarding their ships.

Casablanca

Commander Buc tells Jun Do that Casablanca the best American movie. Later, Sun Moon and Jun Do watch the movie together. Sun Moon compares Jun Do to Rick, the main character of the movie.

Cooler of Tiger Meat

The Koreans take a cooler of tiger meat, which is actually cow meat, as a gift to the Americans. Jun Do privately suggests to the Americans that they can substitute beef for the tiger meat with none of the Koreans knowing the difference. He does not mention to them that the meat is not really tiger meat.

A Bible

The senator's wife offers to send a Bible home with Jun Do but he explains to her that book is forbidden in Korea.

The Yellow Rose of Texas

The Yellow Rose of Texas is the song that the senator sings to the Koreans while they are visiting Texas. Jun Do later teaches this song to Sun Moon.

Camera

Wanda gives this camera to Jun Do so he can take pictures of things in North Korea that he believes that she should see. The camera has no memory, so the images are not stored on it.

Bright Red Cell Phone

It is this cell phone that receives the images from the camera that Wanda gave to Jun Do. This cell phone is the only device capable of receiving and interpreting the images.



Background Radiation Detector

This background radiation detector is taken from the Japanese by the Koreans. The Koreans plan to use it to find uranium ore underground. However, their vessel is intercepted by the Americans before it reaches Korea and the Americans have taken the detector. It is in hopes of getting this detector back that Jun Do and the others are sent to America.

Division 42

Division 42 is a Korean agency that elicits confessions from people accused of crimes against Korea.

Pubyok

Also known as the "floating wall," the Pubyok believe they must beat a confession out of their subjects.

Division of Citizen Biographies

The narrator of Part Two of the novel hopes that after the last of the Pubyok die out, they will change the name of their division to the division of citizen biographies.

Handfuls of Moths

Handfuls of moths are one of the things that Mongnan instructs Jun Do to eat in order to get enough nourishment to stay alive.

Prison 33

Prison 33 is the prison to which Jun Do had been taken and had spent a year. While working in one of the mines of the prison, Jun Do was attacked by and killed Commander Ga.

Prison 9

Prison 9 is the prison where the Officer So warns Jun Do that he will be sent if he does not go after Gil. Prison 9 is also the same prison where there is a fire and all of the prisoners are killed.



The Halo

The halo is a device used by the Koreans when they are sending electrical currents through a person's brain. The halo keeps the patients from hurting their necks during the torture.

His Own Entrance Photo

Jun Do believes that he looks innocent in his own entrance photo into Prison 33.

Koryo Hotel

The Koryo Hotel is where Jun Do, as Commander Ga, is taken to be cleaned up after he escapes from prison. It is to this same hotel that the rower girl is taken for a bath and treatments before being given back to the Americans.

Mount Taesong

Houses for the Minister of Prison Mines, the Minister of Procurement and the Minister of Mass Mobilization are built on the peak of Mount Taesong.

The Dove

In the Best North Korean Story, it is the dove that brings the message to Ga that it is time for him to go back to work.

Geiger Counter

Ga gives this Geiger counter, which is on his desk, to a starving lady so she can sell it and buy food for herself.

Night Market

The night market is a place where the people of North Korea are able to sell things that they have so they can get the things that they need or want. The government denies the existence of this night market.

The Best North Korean Story

A competition is held each year for the Best North Korean Story which is read over the loudspeakers. During this novel, it is the story of Sun Moon and Ga that is read. The



narrator is surprised this is the story that is told because he does not even know the full story of Sun Moon and Ga.

Master Computer

The Dear Leader shows Ga a computer that he says can help him to locate any loved ones of whom he would like to know the whereabouts. The people in Division 42 tell Ga there is no master computer but that it is a lie they tell people to get them to type in the names of the people they care about so that these people can be found and sent to prison.

Bolt Cutters

The bolt cutters are the tool that the interrogators use to cut Comrade Buc's wedding ring off his finger.

Cattle Prod

A cattle prod is one of the tools that the interrogators take with them to question Comrade Buc.

Peaches

Comrade Buc has several cans of peaches prepared in the fruit factory that had been contaminated with botulism. Commander Ga has one of these cans of peaches which he intends to use as a way to kill himself. Instead the interrogator feeds these peaches to his parents. Comrade Buc's family eats a can of these peaches when he is taken to jail so they won't have to go to prison.

Grand People's Opera House

It is at the Grand People's Opera House that Commander Pack and others beat upon Ga when he attends the opera with Sun Moon.

Moranbong Theater

Commander Ga takes a long lunch each day and watches one of Sun Moon's movies.

Fruit Factory 49

Fruit Factory 49 is the factory in which the contaminated peaches were canned.



Wonsan

Wonsan is the place where it is said that people go to retire, but no one has ever seen these people at Wonsan, and they never hear from the people who supposedly go to this resort again.

Worker's Paradise Housing Block

The Worker's Paradise Housing Block is where the interrogator and narrator of part of the novel, lives with his parents.

The Autopilot

The Autopilot is what the interrogator uses to clear the minds of the people who are found guilty of their crimes. After the people are electrified by the autopilot, they are still able to work, but don't have the intelligence they would need to try to run away or fight.

The Artificial Texas

An artificial version of Texas is what the Koreans plan to use to greet the Americans until they discover that the Americans refuse to meet them anywhere but at the airport.

A Pair of Black Cowboy Boots

Buc brings this pair of boots to Jun Do after he has taken on the role of Commander Ga. These are the same boots for which he was fitted in Texas.

Branding Iron

A branding iron reading "Property of the Democratic Peoples Republic of Korea" is made for use in the fake Texas when the Americans come to visit. The interrogator learns that the Kuybok intend to use this branding iron on Gas as his punishment.

The Crow

A crow is a military truck with a black canopy on the back used to take prisoners to camps. The bird, the crow, also makes an appearance in the story when things in the story go against the way the Koreans want them to go.



Guitar

The Dear Leader gives Sun Moon a guitar and insists that she make music with it for the Americans even though Sun Moon does not like the instrument.

Nampo

It is on the road to this city that the fake Texas, constructed by the Koreans, is located.

A Black Mercedes

A black Mercedes is the car that the Dear Leader sends for Sun Moon on the day before she escapes Korea for America.

The Tattoo of Sun Moon

The Captain of the Junma gives Jun Do a tattoo of national actress Sun Moon so that he will appear to be like the others on the ship. This tattoo leads people to believe that Sun Moon is Jun Do's husband and that he is Commander Ga. At the end of the novel, — cuts this tattoo from Jun Do on the order of the Dear Leader as he wants this memento of Sun Moon.

Commander Ga's Golden Belt

Commander Ga won this Golden Belt in taekwondo. It is significant because he beat Japanese taekwondo fighter Kimura.

Taedong River

The Taedong River is a river in Korea that flows through the capital city of Pyongyang.

Rhinoceros-horn Book Ends

These rhinoceros-horn books ends are the gift that the Dear Leader of the Korean people give the Americans when they visit Korea. This gift is intended to offend the Americans.



Rodong Sinmun

The Rodong Sinmun is the newspaper of Pyongyang's Workers' Party of Northern Korea. As Commander Ga, Jun Do hears that every edition of the paper for the coming week is printed on the prior Sunday.



Themes

Life in North Korea/Good Citizenship

Jun Do's story gives a personal look at the way that life is lived in North Korea. The people there are accustomed to being told what to do and how to think. Freedom is an idea that Jun Do finds distasteful. He tells Wanda that it is only the North Korea form of living that has ever made sense to him. He believes that he would feel lost and afraid without the boundaries on which the Korea government puts on him. It is when Jun Do is thrown into jail that his opinions of North Korea seem to change. He had believed that he would not face the same fate as others who had been wrongly jailed before him because he had done nothing wrong. It is only when he helps Sun Moon escape from the bonds of Korea, Jun Do finally recognizes the true feeling of freedom.

Most people in North Korea seem to live in fear of being put in jail. Families don't seem to stay together as they are often separated and killed or imprisoned at the Dear Leader's will. Comrade Buc's family fears this possibility so strongly that they keep peaches contaminated with botulism so they can kill themselves if there ever comes a time when the government tries to split up the family. Family is not a unit that is encouraged in Korea, in fact, the rules of good citizenship indicate that loyalty to the government should come before everything else.

Other rules for good citizenship in North Korea include refraining from thinking about the future; devoting oneself to the country's leaders; and treasuring criticism. Ga and Sun Moon break these rules as they give money to orphans and as they make plans for the future. In the loudspeaker versions of the couple's story, a crow follows them, watching all that they do, noting the actions that go against the rules of good citizenship and reporting them to the Dear Leader.

Love

Love is an important theme in this novel as it is ultimately a love story. In the course of the story, love develops in the most unusual circumstances. Jun Do becomes infatuated with Sun Moon after he first sees her movie while he is being held in Prison 33. He happens to have contact with her husband in the tunnels of the prison and kills him. It is easy for him to take over the position of Sun Moon's husband as her already has her image tattooed on his chest. While he is in prison, Jun Do has used Sun Moon as his shelter from the pain that they have imposed upon him. When he escapes, Jun Do feels as if he owes Sun Moon because of the service that she has given to him.

Although Sun Moon is well aware that Jun Do is not her husband, she slowly grows to love him and open up to him through his kindness and patience. He offers her the greatest gift that anyone could. He devises a plan that will allow her and her children to defect to the freedom of America, a place where the Dear Leader can no longer



manipulate her. Even though Sun Moon believed that she could not get along in America without Jun Do, Jun Do knows that he must stay behind and take the punishment for Sun Moon's defection. This sacrifice is the way that Jun Do shows his love for Sun Moon. Even the Dear Leader does not know what to think of Jun Do's willingness to die for Sun Moon when he had achieved a sort of peace and security for himself.

Identity/Names

A person's identity is a major theme in this novel. Korea does not put a great deal of importance on a person's identity or individuality. In fact, when a person is inducted into the Pubyok, they are relieved of their name. Q-Kee is told by Sarge that since she is Pubyok, she no longer has a need for a name. Many characters in the book are never given a name. The narrator for the second half of the novel, for instance, is never named. He could be any citizen of Korea. The names of Sun Moon's children are also never known. Sun Moon keeps the children's names secret from Ga/Jun Do as if this is a way to protect them. Later, when the children decide that they want to tell Ga/Jun Do their names, he tells them that knowing a person by name is not the best way to know them. He instructs them that they should tattoo the memory of the person on their heart so that they will never be apart.

Jun Do is one character whose identity is never really known. His father can not give him his real name, so Jun Do names himself after a Korean martyr. When Jun Do actually comes face to face with the image of his namesake, he realizes how different he was from this martyr. While Pak Jun Do the martyr died to prove his loyalty to his country, the Jun Do who is a character in this novel is as unloyal to the country as one can be. When he kills Ga and escapes from prison using Ga's identity, Jun Do again proves of how little importance names are in Korea. He easily takes over Ga's identity just because he happens to have the tattoo of Sun Moon on his chest. Because he says that he is Ga, the others who come in contact with him seem to accept that he is who he says that he is. It soon becomes apparent that even though everyone treats him as Ga, everyone also knows that he is not who he says that he is. In contrast, the Americans truly believe that Jun Do is Commander Ga even though he has done nothing to give them that impression. The only evidence upon which they base their knowledge is their recognition of Sun Moon, the Korean actress who is pictured on Jun Do's tattoo.

When considering the theme of identity in this novel it is also important to remember the stoning scene in which Jun Do realizes that it is the Captain from the Junma who is being stoned for trying to escape. Jun Do cries in anger and frustration as he realizes how unfair the North Korean government has been to his friend. Although Jun do doesn't realize it at the time, Mongnan tries to comfort him by telling him that the Captain died free. He died without letting the government take his identity. It is both ironic and fitting that Jun Do should die in the same way. Even though the government of North Korea does all they can to him, he dies free, with his own identity intact.



Stories

The malleability and believability of stories is another theme that is important to this novel. After any event that happens, such as the Junma being boarded by the Americans or the happenings in Texas, the people involved struggle to come up with a story that would satisfy the Dear Leader. It doesn't matter if the story is true, Jun Do is told in many situations, it just needs to fulfill their purposes. When struggling with the issue of the missing portraits, the Captain of the Junma tells Jun Do that the people of Korea don't care about their people, they only care if they tell a story that the government can use. Adversely, Dr. Song tells Jun Do that the people of America don't care as much about the story that a man tells as they do the man himself.

Stories are also important in the second part of the novel as the narrator believes that he provides a valuable service because he struggles to get the truth out of people. He is very painstaking in his search for the truth. It becomes obvious to him that the people of Korea aren't interested in the truth when he hears the loudspeakers telling the story of Sun Moon and Commander Ga when he has not even finished transcribing the true story of the couple's relationship yet. The narrator is also disturbed when Sarge tells him that the people who were at the airport when the Americans visited know the truth about what happened to Sun Moon. The narrator wonders why these leaders don't just tell the true story instead of making up a fantastical story about Sun Moon being kidnapped.

Style

Point of View

There are a variety of points of view in this novel. In the first section of the novel, the story is told completely by a third person and omniscient narrator. It is in the second section of the novel that the point of view becomes varied. In some portions of the last section of the book, the story is still recounted in a third-person point of view, such as the narratives of Jun Do/Ga's time with Sun Moon.

In the sections of the novel told by the worker from Division 42, the story is told from the first-person point of view of the worker. Another difference between the first and second sections of the novel is that the first part of the novel is written in the past tense. In the second part of the novel, the sections of the novel narrated by the worker from Division 42 along with those that record the announcements over the loudspeakers are told in the present tense. Also, in the sections of the book that appear to be information transmitted over the Korean loudspeakers, this information is presented in the first person point of view in the plural tense as if the messages are being presented on behalf of the Korean leaders by the Korean leaders.

Setting

The majority of this novel is set in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. Jun Do's story begins in Chongjin where he stays in the orphanage Long Tomorrows. His father sends him and the other boys in the orphanage to join the army. Next, Officer So takes Jun Do to be part of his kidnapping crew. Much of the kidnapping victims are taken from Japan. The major scene in Japan is the city of Niigata from which the opera singer Rumina is taken.

Next, Jun Do is sent to learn to transcribe English. He is given a post on a fishing vessel which visits several different areas of both Korean and non-Korean waters. After Jun Do is intentionally injured by the shark, he is taken to the second mate's apartment where the second mate's wife takes care of him. Jun Do next travels to Texas where he meets with the Texas senator. After he returns to Korea, Jun Do is taken to a prison where his biography ends.

In the next section of the novel, much of the action takes place in the capital city of Pyongyang. Commander Ga and Sun Moon's home, located on the top of Mount Taesong is a common setting in this portion of the novel. Another major setting in the portion of the novel is the building that houses Division 42 where Jun Do, who is known there as Commander Ga, is being questioned about his part in the disappearance of Sun Moon and her children. A final major setting in this portion of the novel is the apartment where the Division 42 worker lives with his parents.



Language and Meaning

Although this story is shared through several different points of view, the language stays much the same throughout the entire book. There is not much difference in the way that the Koreans are portrayed as speaking in the novel and the way other characters, such as the Texans, are portrayed as speaking. The only exception to this is the section of the novel in which a very angry Senator speaks to Jun Do. It is indicated in this portion that the Senator's southern drawl became much more prominent.

The clean language and sentence structure of this novel focuses the reader's attention on the characters and the predicaments that they face. Since the North Koreans seek to have no outstanding individuality it is appropriate that not much of their personality is portrayed through their speech. There are only a few instances in which Korean words are used in the novel. In these cases the words often don't have American equivalents. For instance, Sun Moon's dresses, Choson-ots, are described using the Korean word because there is really no similar word in English. What is assumed to be the Korean word for a man's genitals is also used instead of the English equivalent.

Structure

This novel has an unusual structure. It could actually be considered to be two different stories in one book. This first section of the novel accounts for about 40 percent of the book. This part of the novel tells the biography of Jun Do. It is the linear story of the life one Korean man raised in an orphanage by his father who was in mourning over his missing wife. The second, and longer, portion of the novel tells the story of Jun Do as he pretends to be Commander Ga, who is Sun Moon's husband.

The second portion of the novel gets more complex as it is told by a variety of different voices, from different viewpoints and from varying points in time. The portions of the story told by the unnamed narrator who works with Division 42 are fairly linear. However, these portions are interspersed with the narration of Jun Do's interactions with Sun Moon from the time he first began to impersonate Commander Ga until he is assisted with his death by the worker from Division 42. These portions of the story are not necessarily in linear form. First, all of these sections take place before Ga is taken to Division 42. Although the stories are taking place at different periods in time, they provide information that works together to give the reader an idea what really happened and why it happened in the context of the North Korean society.

For instance, the story is interspersed with announcements presented by the Korean loudspeaker system. The story being related over the loudspeakers is the story of Jun Do told with the spin that the Korean government wants to put on the story. The narrator tells the story as he is able to collect it from Ga even though he does not believe that Ga did not kill Sun Moon. There are also the third person sections that tell the story of Ga and Sun Moon's developing relationship.



Quotes

"But this was how Jun Do, at fourteen, became a tunnel soldier, trained in the art of zero-light combat" (Part One, p. 9).

"Jun Do never looked. He knew the televisions were huge and there was all the rice you could eat. Yet he wanted no part of it— he was scared that if he saw it with his own eyes, his entire life would mean nothing" (Part One, p. 22).

"It struck Jun Do that one day men had come for his mother like this, that he was now one of those men" (Part One, p. 23).

"'The world thinks I'm an orphan, that's my curse,' Jun Do told him. 'But how did a Pyongyang boy like you end up doing such shitty jobs'" (Part One, p. 28).

"Jun Do had dealt with this his whole life, the ways it was impossible for people from normal families to conceive of a man in so much hurt that he couldn't acknowledge his own son, that there was nothing worse than a mother leaving her children, though it happened all the time, that 'take' was a word people used for those who had so little to give as to be immeasurable" (Part One, p. 29).

"The life of a fisherman was good - there were no endless factory quotas to fill, and on a ship there was no loudspeaker blaring government reports all day" (Part One, p. 44).

"But the truth was the idea of conspiracy appealed to Jun Do. That people were in communication, that things had a design, that there was intention, significance, and purpose in what people did - he needed to believe this" (Part One, p. 47).

"How to tell the Second Mate that the only way to shake your ghosts was to find them, and that the only place Jun Do could do that was right here. How to explain the recurring dream that he's listening to his radio, that he's getting the remnants of important messages, from his mother, from other boys in his orphanage" (Part One, p. 70).

"Even the crew thought of her as rowing toward dawn, as if dawn was a metaphor for something transcendent or utopian. Jun Do understood that she was rowing until dawn, when with weariness and fulfillment she could pack it in for sleep" (Part One, p. 75).

"It's because no one ever taught you about family and sacrifice and doing whatever it takes to protect your own" (Part One, p. 83).

"His whole life, he'd been assigned to work details without warning or explanation. There'd never been any point in asking questions or speculating on why - it never



changed the work that had to be done. But then again, he'd never had anything to lose before" (Part One, p. 117).

"For us, the story is more important than the person. If a man and his story are in conflict, it is the man who must change" (Part One, p. 121).

"When the dogs returned, the Senator gave them treats from his pocket, and Jun Do understood that in communism, you'd threaten a dog into compliance, while in capitalism, obedience is obtained through bribes" (Part One, p. 136).

"You don't want us to board your fishing boats, that's something to talk about. We sit down in the same room. We suggest that you maybe don't use fishing boats to smuggle Taepodong missile parts, counterfeit currency, heroin, and so on. Then we reach an agreement. Instead I'm wasting my time talking to the chumps, while you were what, getting a gander" (Part One, p. 160).

"So, Commander Ga, you can give a message direct to the Dear Leader, and this is on my letterhead. You tell him this kind of business is not appreciated. You tell him no boat is safe now. You tell him he'll never see his precious toy again - he can kiss it good-bye" (Part One, p. 161).

"'I was a model citizen,' he told them. 'I was a hero of the state,' he added, and then stepped through the door in his new boots, out into a matterless place, and from this point forward nothing further is known of the citizen named Pak Jun Do" (Part One, p. 175).

"When you have a subject's biography, there is nothing between the citizen and the state" (Part Two, p. 181).

"There's no way around it: to get a new life, you've got to trade in your old one" (Part Two, p. 181).

"Yes, I thought, Ga's would be quite a story to tell: an unknown man impersonates a famous one" (Part Two, p. 188).

"It was only when he'd seen Sun Moon's movie that he finally had a reserve— she saved him from everything" (Part Two, p. 209).

"'Your husband attacked me this morning,' he said. 'We were in a tunnel, in Prison 33, and I killed him'" (Part Two, p. 215).

"But here, discipline reigns, and people know that nothing happens without a purpose, that no task goes unnoticed, that if a man gives an old woman in an oak tree a nuclear detector, he does so because the Dear Leader wishes him to. That if there are two Commander Gas or one or none, it is as the Dear Leader desires" (Part Two, p. 223).



"In Prison 33, there was a certain inmate, a soldier from an orphan unit. Legally, he was a hero. He has gone missing, and we need his expertise. Perhaps you met him and perhaps he shared some of his thoughts with you" (Part Two, p. 227).

"And next to a piece of tape bearing Comrade Buc's name, I found a can of peaches with a red-and-green label, grown in Manpo, canned in Fruit Factory 49" (Part Two, p. 280).

"Now, an important word from our Minister of Defense: Certainly the loudspeaker in each and every apartment in North Korea provides news, announcements, and cultural programming, but it must be reminded that it was by Great Leader Kim Il Sung's decree in 1973 that an air-raid warning system be installed across this nation, and a properly functioning early-warning network is of supreme importance." (Part Two, p. 289).

"And here was Pak Jun Do, who took his own life in a test of loyalty to our leaders" (Part Two, p. 291).

"Ga thought of how difficult it was to come to see the lies you told yourself, the ones that allowed you to function and move forward. To really do it, you needed someone's help" (Part Two, p. 298).

"'The wound of not knowing,' Ga said to her. 'That's the one that never heals'" (Part Two, p. 299).

"I need a letter of transit and you must help me. Not because you killed my husband or because we will pay the price when the Dear Leader casts you aside, but because you are like Rick. You are an honorable man like Rick in the movie" (Part Two, p. 306).

"After years of failure, I now understood that by writing Commander Ga's biography, maybe I was also writing my own" (Part Two, p. 308).

"When the American plane leaves, we'll be on it, Sun Moon, the kids, me" (Part Two, p. 322).

"The keen-eyed crow is here, citizens, because it spotted a man tossing a shiny object into the bushes, where some scrambling orphans fought to obtain it. Not only does the giving of coins to orphans rob them of their self-respect and Juche Spirit, it violates a central rule of good citizenship: Practice Self-Sufficiency" (Part Two, p. 343).

"Can a spoiled American girl handle the grand notions that emanate from a mind as great as yours? Can this girl from a land of corruption and greed comprehend the purity of your wisdom? Is she worthy of you, or should she be sent home so that a real woman can take her place" (Part Two, p. 348).

"Each time I did I could visualize success, each time I felt discovery was at hand and I'd be able to leverage the actress to get Commander Ga's story, and then his biography



would be mine, with Ga's real name in gold on the spine, and then Sarge's office would become mine" (Part Two, p. 360).

"Because this mystery is the only reminder to the Dear Leader that what happened to him is real, that something happened that was out of his control" (Part Two, p. 363).

"Our real problem has arrived,' she said. 'The man who knows me, he wants me back'" (Part Two, p. 373).

"And yet, what had prepared him for this, for the Dear Leader tugging at the string that would finally unravel him? When the Dear Leader wanted you to lose more, he gave you more to lose. Sun Moon had told him that. And here it was. To what bunker would she be taken? With what light-hearted stories would she be regaled? What elixir would they sip while the Dear Leader readied himself for more serious amusement" (Part Two, p. 373).

"It wasn't luck that nobodies lived in army barracks while somebodies lived in homes on the tops of mountains" (Part Two, p. 374).

"A name isn't a person,' Ga said. 'Don't ever remember someone by their name. To keep someone alive, you put them inside you, you put their face on your heart. Then, no matter where you are, they're always with you because they're a part of you.'" Part Two, p. 379).

"No, my husband. Or whoever he is,' she said. 'He has a good heart.'" Part Two, p. 387).

"There were people who came into your life and cost you everything. Comrade Buc's wife was right about that. It had felt pretty shitty being one of those people. He had been the person who took. He'd been the one who was taken. And he'd been the one left behind. Next he would find out what it was like to be all three at once" (Part Two, p. 388).

"No, I never gave you away. You were taken from me,' the Dear Leader said. 'In my own opera house, Commander Ga refused to bow. Then he named you as his prize. In front of everyone, he called your name" (Part Two, p. 421).

"Our nation rescued her from certain death in our waters,' the Dear Leader said. 'Your nation trespassed into our waters, illegally boarded our ship, and stole from me. I get back what you thieved before you get back what I saved'" (Part Two, p. 424).

"When the graver danger awaited, it wasn't abandoning, it was saving. He'd been saved, he now saw. A beauty, his mother, a singer. Because of that, a terrible fate awaited— she hadn't left him behind, she'd saved him from what was ahead" (Part Two, p. 429).



"The Senator turned in horror to see one of his prized Catahoula dogs tearing through the tendons of a man's forearm. The Senator then passed an appraising gaze upon his hosts, the look of dark discovery on his face suggesting that he now understood there was nothing that North Korea wouldn't eventually make maniacal and vicious" (Part Two, p. 434).

"'I don't understand who you are,' the Dear Leader said to him. 'You killed my nemesis. You escaped Prison 33. You could have gotten away for good. But you came here. What kind of person would do that? Who would make their way to me, who would throw away his own life, just to spoil mine'" (Part Two, p. 438).



Topics for Discussion

Research the lifestyle of those in North Korea under the leadership of Kim Jong Il. How closely does the picture of life in North Korea as portrayed in the book match the information you find through research?

Do you believe that the Second Mate was able to escape on the life raft or that he was caught? Explain the rationale behind your theory.

Explain the connection between Jun Do and Sun Moon.

What is the significance of the Dear Leader sending Sun Moon to prepare the rower girl for her reunion with the Americans? What, if anything, do these two women have in common?

Describe the way the imagery and meaning of Jun Do's tattoo changes throughout the novel.

Discuss the treatment of names in the novel as well as the North Korean view of names, i.e. the giving of martyr's names to orphans and the lack of need for names in the Pubyok.

What is the relationship between the Dear Leader and the real Commander Ga?

Why is it that so many people seem to hate Commander Ga even though he is praised as a national hero? Discuss this question both in general terms and in specifics. For instance, why did the Dear Leader hate Commander Ga? What about the Dear Leader?

Discuss the relationship between Sun Moon and the Dear Leader.

Do you believe that the Dear Leader knows the true identity of the Commander Ga in the second section of the novel? Since everyone knows that the man is an imposter, why is he allowed to live?

Discuss the theme of stories as it is presented in the novel. What types of stories are told? Why does the narrator believe the stories that he writes are so important?

Discuss the idea of the truth as it is presented in the novel. Although the narrator claims to be searching for truth, he doesn't recognize the truth about Ga's confession when he hears it. Why does the narrator not recognize the truth?

Discuss the idea of freedom as it is portrayed in the novel. Compare and contrast the ideas that the Koreans have of freedom and those of the Americans. Why is it that this freedom that Ga finally feels at the end of the novel is the greatest feeling that he believes he will ever have? How was the Dear Leader responsible for taking away his freedom all of his life?