

The basic plot of the classic adventure novel is deceptively simple. Wrongfully imprisoned, an innocent man finds himself pulled from his previous life. Even as he fights to survive, it is uncertain if things will ever be right again.

"Long Road Home" is just such a novel. Though this true-life tale is no work of fiction, it is a thoughtful political adventure story told in the tradition of the masters.

Kim Young was never a man to question the rules of North Korea's power structure. He grew up in a state-run orphanage, and was adopted by well-to-do party members. He knew no other life, and quickly saw that toeing the party line brought prestige, honor, and power. He was naturally inclined to place the party before all others - his wife, his children and himself - and he quickly rose to the rank of lieutenant colonel. And Kim innocently loved his country, earnestly believing all their interpretations of world events.

Yet despite his success, Kim longed to know more about his birth family. He was given to the state as a supposed war orphan of World War II, but had never found more information about where he had come from. Then a chance meeting in a remote village gave him the lead he needed to find his lost history. He found his mother was still alive and longed to see him. But she had given him up for a very specific reason. His father - for unsubstantiated reasons - had been executed as an American spy during the war.

In North Korea the social standing of a family was the first and final mark of a person's character. What your family did, or had done, was what you were. And being the son of a supposed American spy was as bad as being a spy yourself. No matter Kim's outstanding record - he'd been given a recommendation from Kim Jong-Il himself - it was inevitable that the truth would come out. And Kim knew from those first familial revelations that when it did he would be treated as a traitor to his country.

This is a story that is almost impossible to put down. Each detail - be it sad, disturbing, or mundane - is captivating. We are walked through Kim's pride in his role in building the party, his constant longing to locate his wife and children, and the pain and desperation of his imprisonment. Each chapter, each painful yet wonderful memory, all strike vibrant notes in the reader's heart. As clear as Kim's suffering and horror at betrayal by his country is, his longing to return home is evident.

Kim uses his narrative to shine light on the worst and best aspects of life in North Korea. Because of his high status he was given access into party-directed programs that ran secretive import and export businesses. And because of his imprisonment in Camp 14 - a work camp no other prisoner is known to have left alive - he also has a unique perspective on how North Korea treats those it wants to disappear.

Kim's narrative voice has the clean, sparse feel of a timeless Zen parable. Yet like the warrior he was trained to be, this is a journey that is taken in quick and measured steps. He never allows the pace of the novel to lag, yet it is easy to keep up with him. You'll always be interested in what will happen next.

Reading this novel is both an escapist joy and a tale for serious consideration. It should not be missed.

Ms. Adamkiewicz is a fearless writer who never met a genre, subject, or format she didn't like.

She has written professionally - as an independent author, freelance writer, writing intern, or general business writer - for the past six years.

In her free time, Ms. Adamkiewicz enjoys biking, exploring odd corners of Northeast Ohio, spending far too much time on Twitter, spending FAR too much time on YouTube, and discovering those good books she hasn't read yet.

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