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### A Struggle for Dreams

The stories you are about to read are about two kids trying to save their siblings with the government's help. One child lives in North Korea's dictatorship and is named Yong-Chol; his life is hard and isn't so simple. The other kid is named Camile and lives in France's republic. Her life has its ups and downs but its overall pretty good. You will see how similar two lives can be but under different circumstances can change.

### North Korea

1/16/2016

I woke up to the soft crying of my mother; she has been doing this every night since before I can remember. When my father was alive, he would sweetly coax her back to sleep whispering sweet songs in her ear but now that he's gone, her crying has gotten worse. I sometimes wake up in the middle of the night to find her curled up in ball, crying. She never told me what's wrong, but I think it has to do with her older brother.

When they were kids, he got taken away for conspiring against the government. Before he was taken away, he had been beaten and slashed right in front of her face. My grandpa (her dad ) had left when she was just a little baby. Her brother, who was ten years older, assumed the role as her dad.

After her crying woke me up, I silently got dressed as to not wake my little sister Sunwoo. She is five and is the sweetest thing you'll ever meet. After school I'll pick her up and

she'll run into my arms, tell me things she learned that day and what she ate for lunch and all sorts of things that a five-year-old does.

I didn't want her to find my mom crying again because she already had to deal with so much. I walked to my mom and sat beside her. I laid my head on her shoulder, and after that I quickly fell asleep.

January 17,2016

When I woke up the next morning, I saw my mom making breakfast. Her long black hair tied up in a neat bun as to not get it in the vegetable soup, the same thing I've had for breakfast since my dad died. "Good morning, Yong-Chol, how did you sleep?" she said this like she was trying to be happy but I could tell she was exhausted by the bags under eyes. "Good." I sighed. "What about you?" "Fine." She said this without looking me in the eye "Well, I better be getting to work." I murmured. "Ok, well take some soup with you." She poured some soup into a small plastic container and set it down on the small kitchen table that the government issued us from our unit.

My mom works by cleaning people's laundry and I had to stop school when I was nine and work because we couldn't afford to keep me in school. We still can barely afford food but we make do with what we have.

Before I left school, I wanted to be an author like my father, I had dreams of a better life, a life where no one had to live in fear and could do whatever they wanted. Now I know that will

never happen, even if it did my mom wouldn't take it well. My father had died because he had written something that the government didn't like and they came for him.

It happened when I was little but I remember it clear as day. They came in the middle of the night, I heard a piercing scream from my mother and groans coming from my father. I ran out into the living room and saw him sprawling on the floor beaten and bruised, blood trickling down his face and my mother sobbing and screaming at two men with thick beards, guns and what looked to be bullet proof vests. I just stood there screaming and looked at my father. He looked back at me with a small smile and whispered "I love you" then the men with the guns shot him right there in front of me, my mother, and my unborn sister. They grabbed my father's bloody body and dragged him outside, leaving a trail of blood behind. My sister had never met our father because when he died my mother was pregnant with her and she had to raise her all by herself.

The memory hits me as I walked out of our little apartment door and went down the stairs. I worked at a little grocery store down the block. When I got there, I saw yet another photograph of Kim Jong Un the "President." In North Korea there were pictures of him everywhere, in schools, shops, billboards, etc. "Young-Chol you're late, where were you?" "Sorry Gwan, my mom was making soup." I replied. I did feel sorry; the store needed all the help it could get lately. "Ma was making soup what type of excuse is that, get to work!" I work until 6:30 so when I walked back my family's apartment it was dark outside. I unlocked our door with a small key kept in my pocket. "I'm back" I said as I walked through the door but no one replied. Then I saw a small note on the kitchen table "emergency sun-woo in the hospital no time" it read. I swear my heart stopped beating all I could think of what could've happened to her. I ran out the front door and all the way to the small hospital in my neighborhood. When I got

there I knew something was wrong my mom was in the waiting room crying I ran up to her “ what happened” “she broke her leg at school, she’s going to need a cast and x-rays” when I heard that my heart dropped, me and my mom both new we couldn’t afford x-rays yet alone a cast. My eyes filled with tears poor little Sung-woo, she might not ever be able to walk again. There must be something we can do about it, I thought in my head. Then it came to me, I could send a letter to Kim Jong Un the president of North Korea, it’s a risky thing to do but it might just save Sung-woo’s ability to walk. When I got back home, I got out a piece of paper and wrote.

Dear president Kim Jong Un,

My sister Sung- Woo had an accident at school and broke her leg. Me and my mom work hard but we still can’t afford to give her the treatment that she needs. Can you and your people help us? We would be forever grateful.

Sincerely, Yong-Chol

Then I ran to the post office and dropped it off the next week Sung-woo was still in the hospital and they were threatening to kick her out if we couldn’t pay so when I finally found a letter addressed from the capitol I felt so relieved I ran back home and showed my mom asking her to read it aloud because I was too nervous. But when she started to read her face dropped “They declined.” she said her voice shaky. “What, why, how!” I yelled. I couldn’t believe this. “That’s not all, they also said that if we ask for something again, they’ll arrest us.”

So, after that we stayed low, we did what we were told and Sung-woo never did walk again. All because our stupid government couldn’t spare a little money or even give us insurance.

10 Years later....

It's been ten years now, and Sung-Woo has finally learned to walk with a cane. I have my own family, two daughters and a lovely wife. I never recovered from everything and I never became an author because the government wouldn't let me, but maybe, just maybe I can live happily.

*The End*

France

12/16/2016

I woke up to the buzz of my alarm clock I groaned and rolled on my side. It couldn't be 8:00 yet, could it? My mom knocked on the door and entered. "Get up Cammille, it's almost time for school!" I got up and put on my boring school uniform again "why can't we get free dress at least once" I moaned. My mom ignored me and went downstairs to make breakfast. I brushed my hair and put it in a tight braid. Then I went downstairs to join my mom. "Camile! Help me with my homework PLEASE!" my little sister Emy screeched "No I have to eat breakfast and pack my bag, why didn't you do it last night anyway" I sighed "Because I had soccer practice and I didn't get home until 7:00" she wailed back I looked at my mom and she gave me the "LOOK" that says you better help your sister. So, I walked over and helped her. Ten minutes later we finally got in the car and drove to school.

When I got there, I saw my best friend Maria. “Hi Pookie” we exclaimed as we ran to each other. We walked inside school and to our lockers. I had math first hour with Mrs. Dubois. I hated math and Mrs. Dubois didn’t help. She always had this look on her face that made you want to shrivel up into a ball and she never helps you with anything. So when I got to class and saw the big sign on the whiteboard that said POP QUIZ. It was really boring and hard and I don’t really feel the need to include it.

Next, I had a bunch of boring classes like social studies, science and P.E. but then after all that I had my favorite class, French. I love writing, when I grow up I want to be an author. Oh and did I talk about reading? I don’t want to sound like a nerd, but books are wonderful. How you just get lost in a story, like you’re actually in it instead of our boring normal world. Some of my favorite books are “*To Kill a Mockingbird*” by Harper Lee, “*Catcher in the Rye*” by J.D. Salinger and “*Ann of Green Gables*” by Eliza Gatewood Warren. That’s why I want to be an author. I want to make someone feel happy and warm inside.

In French class Mrs. Martin was talking about Shakespeare when the phone rang, which was weird because the phone usually only rang when someone was going home or to the dentist. “Camilla its for you” she said. I didn’t have a dentist appointment today or my mom forgot to tell me which was unlike her. When I picked up the phone my mom was on the other side. “What’s wrong” my voice was shaky, “It’s your sister, she broke leg on the playground and she’s to the hospital right now.” My mom said her voice sounded worried but steady at the same time. “Ok, can I come?” “Yes, I’m coming right now, wait in the office I’m almost there, bye” I put down the phone and looked at Mrs. Martin and she nodded her head like she already knew what I was going to ask. I nodded my head back and walked down the hall to the front office. It was a small

room with floral wallpaper and a desk where Mrs. Richardson, the receptionist worked. I sat in one of the small chairs in the corner of the room.

When my mom finally came, I stood up and walked to the car with her. "How is Emy?" "Fine, she's getting treated right now," my mom added. When we got there, I ran to Emy and hugged her, even though she was in a hospital bed. "How do you feel?" "Just fine, I'm going to have a cast!" Emy chirped happily. "Yeah, you are!" I piped back. Emy always figures out a way to look at things with a good perspective. "Do you know how long she's going to have to stay here?" I asked my mom "No but hopefully not to long" my mom replied. She seemed sad but I couldn't figure out why.

When me and my mom got home, I went to my room and got ready for bed. We had dinner at the hospital with Emy but we couldn't stay the night because I had school and my mom had work. My dad was out of the picture; he left when I was just a little baby and Emy wasn't even born yet. I didn't care me, mom and Emy were all that we needed but when I went to bed, I could hear soft crying coming from the kitchen table.

I got up and went to my mom's side. "What's wrong?" I asked my mom. "It's Emy, we can't afford to fix her arm." My mom said somberly "Well can't we get insurance or something?" "We have it" my mom said tearing up now "and we still can't afford it" "Can't we get a loan from the bank?" I asked getting worried "Yes but how will we afford to pay it back?" my mom sniveled "I'll start to work a job after school and... well ask the government I'm sure they'll understand" "ok" my mom decided "we'll do that, how about tomorrow after school I'll pick you up and well right that letter, sound good?" "yeah" I murmured back "sounds good." The next day

after school me and my mom sat down on the dining table and wrote a letter, the letter went something like this

Dear François Hollande and Comp.

I'm Camille age 14 and my sister is in hospital because she broke her arm and I know that doesn't sound bad but me and my mom can't afford to pay all the bills and if my sister's arm doesn't get fixed she can have serious injuries in the future and probably won't be able to use that arm again. Can you please help us? We would be forever thankful and when we get back on our feet, we will repay you with all that you can.

Sincerely,

The Laurent family

The next couple of days whenever I got home, I checked the mailbox until finally we got a letter back, it read

Dear, Laurents We are pleased to inform you that we will be sending you 4,000€ to help your sister but we will take you up on your offer to repay by donating a little money to the needy ones you get back on your feet sincerely. The French republic

When mom heard the news, we were at the hospital before you could say Bam! And Emy got her arm fixed good as new and everything went back to normal.

20 years later...

I'm a professional writer and I've written three young adult books. I have one kid named Sophie, who is 4 years old and I also teach college classes on literature during the day. I couldn't be happier.

*The End*

In these stories are two kids trying to help their families and dealing with their own dreams at the same time. One succeeds and finds her place while Yong-Chol couldn't no matter how hard he tried couldn't because of his circumstances. They both wanted to become writers and they both had dreams of better lives. So, what will you take out of this story? Will you take a life lesson out of it or will you forget and fall back into your starting place? What is your dream?