

2009

# The Conscript

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*Macalester College*

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# Honors Project

Macalester College

Spring 2009

Title: The Conscript

Author: Timothy Lehman

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Date: May 1, 2009

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# The Conscript

by  
Tim Lehman

Senior Honors Project  
2009

Advisor:  
Peter Bognanni

FADE IN:

EXT. BARRACK 7H - NIGHT

TITLE ON: NONSAN MILITARY BASE - SOUTH KOREA

BEN BAK, 20, a Korean-American of moderate build and height exits from his barrack, trailed by a group of other military recruits into the inky night. Another recruit, JI-TAE, 25, bulky and built stands waiting for him, bare-chested, leaning against a telephone pole.

JI-TAE

Shirt off, motherfucker. Let's see those rippled abs.

Ben stares at him for a brief moment before beginning to unbutton his camouflage jacket. He then takes off the white tank top he wears under the coat. He looks up at Ji-Tae.

The crowd forms a circle around the two preparing to fight. Ben's friend, DAK-HO, 20, short and scrawny looks on, concerned. Ben appears nervous, breathing heavily, doing his best to hide it.

Ji-Tae hops up and down excitedly, shaking his arms, warming his muscles. He settles down and advances on Ben. Ben digs his heels into the ground and raises his fists. His breathing quickens.

Suddenly, the door to the barrack bursts open, and MIN-SIK emerges holding his rifle. His eyes are wide open, taking in the scene around him.

Ji-Tae and Ben stop their advances, turning along with everybody else to look at Min-Sik.

MIN-SIK

This is my fight.

Everybody stares at him, not daring to look away. He raises his rifle and points it at Ji-Tae.

MIN-SIK (CONT'D)

I don't need you to stand up for me. I can handle myself. I'm going to finish this.

Min-Sik lines up his shot, gun trained at Ji-Tae's chest. Ji-Tae stares back, smirking, unbelieving, infallible. Ben backs up next to Dak-Ho.

DAK-HO  
 You have to stop him. He's going to  
 shoot him.

                  BEN  
 He has a gun.

                  DAK-HO  
 He'll listen to you.

Ben doesn't say anything.

                  DAK-HO (CONT'D)  
 He's going to kill him!

Ben hesitates.

                  BEN  
 Min-Sik?

CUT TO BLACK:

TITLE ON: PART I

CUT TO:

INT. COLLEGE DORM ROOM - MORNING

TITLE ON: SIX MONTHS EARLIER

Early light streams in through the blinds into BEN BAK's dorm room. The cinder-block room is bare; all of Ben's possessions have been packed into a pile of clear plastic bins sitting on the floor.

Ben is woken by a knock on the door. He drags himself out of bed and reaches for his frameless glasses on his night stand. He has medium-length black hair and is wearing the white "UNION-PSCE" T-shirt and athletic shorts that he slept in.

He opens the door. Standing there is his father, MR. BAK, 59, his hair graying in a distinguished fashion, his face creased and lined.

                  BEN  
 Hey dad.

                  MR. BAK  
 Hello Ben.

                  BEN  
 (rubbing his eyes)  
 Sorry, I just got up.

MR. BAK

I expected that you would be awake by now.

BEN

No, no. It's fine. Did you have a good drive down?

MR. BAK

The traffic was not bad, but it was terrible going into Washington. We should leave now. Let's go.

BEN

Let me change clothes first. I'll meet you out at the car.

CUT TO:

INT. FORD EXPLORER - LATER

Mr. Bak drives the car as Ben sits in the passenger seat looking out the window. They sit in silence.

Ben reaches over and turns on the radio.

Snippets of an NPR new program can be heard on the radio in the background:

NPR NEWSCASTER (O.S.)

(Filtered)

...soldiers died today in a helicopter crash outside of Tikrit. This brings the total American deaths in Iraq in December to 23 so far...

...Reports today from North Korea indicate Kim Jong-Il has asked for further testing of nuclear weapons. The U.N. Security Council is reportedly drafting a resolution condemning this action...

Ben, paying little attention to the news, perks up when he hears North Korea mentioned.

BEN

Sounds like things could be pretty dangerous over there.

MR. BAK

President Roh will not tolerate any aggression.

(MORE)

MR. BAK (CONT'D)

The full might of the South Korean military would be brought down upon the North if they attempted anything. You will not have to worry while you study.

Ben, not convinced, looks out the window and watches the scenery pass as his father continues to drive.

CUT TO:

EXT. SUBURBAN NEIGHBOORHOOD - DAY

The Explorer pulls into the driveway of the Bak family's cookie cutter suburban home. As he and his father exit the car, his MOTHER and younger SISTER emerge through the front door to greet Ben.

MRS. BAK, 55, is tall and willowy with a sense about her that she can be doing thirteen different things at once and be successful at all of them.

POLLY, 17, is a high school senior. She comes out from the house finishing the last few bars of Winter, the fourth concerto of Vivaldi's Four Seasons, on her violin.

MRS. BAK

(embracing Ben)

Ben! It's so good to see you.

BEN

It's good to see you, too.

(Released from his mother,  
he turns to his sister)

What's up?

POLLY

(motioning to her violin)

I'm playing at the Christmas Eve service. I've been practicing nonstop since Thursday.

BEN

(grabbing a bin from the trunk of the Explorer)

It sounds really good.

POLLY

Better than your singing, anyway.

BEN

What?



POLLY

I heard a recording of your a cappella group at school and let's just say I wasn't that impressed.

BEN

Hey, we in Naturally Sharp take singing very seriously.

POLLY

You guys forgot the words to Eleanor Rigby halfway through the song!

BEN

There's a perfectly good explanation for that.

POLLY

What?

BEN

We were drunk.

MRS. BAK

Ben!

(beat)

Let me help you with that. It's so nice to have you back.

CUT TO:

INT. DINING ROOM - NIGHT

The family sits around the dinner table later that evening eating a pot roast and banchan, South Korean side dishes. Tiny bowls of kimchi (cabbage), jorim (simmered meat) and japchae (translucent yam noodles) contrast markedly with the American main dish.

BEN

I'm telling you Dad, a hard-line stance towards reunification isn't going to work. The rest of the world just needs to show the North that they have nothing to lose and everything to gain from unifying with the South.

MR. BAK

North Korea has gotten fat from the handouts of the rest of the world.

(MORE)

MR. BAK (CONT'D)

They are corrupt and undemocratic and will continue to take the charity of the West. The South must stand firm.

BEN

Standing firm. Our guns pointed across the 38th parallel at their guns.

Polly rolls her eyes at the argument between Ben and Mr. Bak. Mrs. Bak looks down at her plate, paying attention to her food.

POLLY

Can we talk about something else? All you two ever do is argue about politics.

MR. BAK

Not now Polly. I need to correct Ben's insufficient knowledge of Korean politics.

(To Ben)

There is no benefit for Seoul in talking nice to the North as they train their weapons on us behind their backs. They will not hesitate-

-

BEN

(interrupting)

Dammit dad--

MRS. BAK

Ben!

BEN

(paying no attention to the interruption)

--They'd have no reason to build weapons if they didn't feel threatened by us.

(Beat, then continuing quietly)

I thought you said there would be nothing to worry about while I'm in Korea. Now you're saying they have missiles pointed at us.

MR. BAK

Who can know what a madman will do. And do not interrupt again Ben.

(MORE)

MR. BAK (CONT'D)

Being in college does not mean you can be uncivil.

BEN

Jesus dad, it was your fucking idea for me to go.

MRS. BAK

(more forcefully)

Ben!

(Changing the subject)

Did you hear that Polly got accepted early to Julliard?

BEN

That's great! What happened to Harvard?

MR. BAK

(faint smile)

She was just applying there to make me happy. But I will be happy whatever she does. She is so talented.

Polly and Ben exchange glances. The rest of the family returns to their meals and continue to eat.

CUT TO:

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

The Baks sit around their Christmas tree on Christmas morning. Most of the presents have already been opened, and Polly is eagerly looking through her gifts.

Mr. and Mrs. Bak sit on the couch, drinking coffee with various gifts, mostly books and articles of clothing, sitting around their feet. Ben is flipping through a graphic novel he received.

Ben's mom gets up and picks up a gift from under the tree. She hands it to Ben.

MRS. BAK

Merry Christmas.

The package is immaculately wrapped and has a tag on it reading "TO: BEN; FROM: MOM AND DAD." He opens the package. It's a big, hardcover notebook. Probably a Moleskine.

BEN

A notebook. Thanks.

MR. BAK

We decided that since you are going to be gone for the next year, having a journal will help you remember this experience for the rest of your life.

Ben nods, unengaged.

MR. BAK (CONT'D)

You were ten years old when we left Korea and came to the United States. I do not know how much of that time in Korea you recollect, but I want to be sure that you remember where you came from. When you write in this book, and for as long as you keep this book, you will not forget.

BEN

How could I forget where I came from while living with you?

MR. BAK

Before you were American, you were Korean. You are still Korean, you will always be Korean.

CUT TO:

INT. POLLY'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Polly is laying in bed reading. Her walls are covered in posters of Rain, the Korean pop music sensation.

There is a knock on the door.

POLLY

Yeah?

Ben walks in and sits down in one of her chairs. Polly sits up in bed.

BEN

I don't think I can do this.

POLLY

Do what?

BEN

I can't go to Seoul.

POLLY

What are you talking about?

BEN

I can barely speak Korean. I'm going to get eaten alive over there.

POLLY

Just find some guys to play Starcraft with. You'll be fine.

BEN

(not listening)

And why am I studying politics? I don't care about politics. It's just the same things over and over. North versus South. Us versus them. Nothing changes.

POLLY

Send me letters. That's what you should do. Gifts, too. Especially expensive gifts.

BEN

Right. Yeah.

POLLY

I don't know what else to tell you, Ben. You'll figure it out.

CUT TO:

INT. BEN'S BEDROOM - DAWN

Ben lies in bed awake staring at the ceiling. He gets out of bed and changes out of the clothes he was sleeping in. He reaches into his dresser and throws a couple shirts and a pair of pants into a backpack.

He grabs his wallet and a set of keys. Wearing his backpack, he tiptoes out of his room.

CUT TO:

INT. GARAGE - DAWN

Ben climbs into the driver's seat of the Ford Focus parked in the garage. He sets the backpack down in the seat next to him.

He places the key in the ignition but hesitates before turning the key. He leans back in the seat and closes his eyes.

In a fit of resolve, Ben opens his eyes and fires up the car.

He hits the button on the visor to open the garage door. As it opens, he sees his dad walking up the driveway from the mail box, newspaper in hand.

BEN

Shit.

His dad walks up to the car. Ben rolls down the window.

MR. BAK

Where are you going?

BEN

(nervously)

I just wanted to take on last drive before leaving. It's going to be a year before I get to drive again. I'll miss it. Lots.

Mr. Bak considers this.

MR. BAK

What is in the backpack?

BEN

Nothing. Just some things.

MR. BAK

Get out of the car. We're leaving for the airport soon. You need to get ready.

CUT TO:

INT. DULLES INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT TERMINAL - MORNING

The Baks stand outside of the overcrowded security checkpoint. Impatient travelers push through them as they say their goodbyes.

MRS. BAK

Email us as soon as you get there, okay?

BEN

Sure.

MRS. BAK

Your laptop battery is fully charged? Don't waste it on the flight watching a movie. Make sure you have enough power to send an email once you get to Seoul. Wait. Does Incheon International have wireless? If they don't-

BEN

Mom, mom. Don't worry. I'll send you an email as soon as I get there.

MRS. BAK

Okay. Be safe!  
 (She hugs Ben tightly)  
 Have a good year. I love you so much.

BEN

I love you, too. I'll call every week-

MRS. BAK

How about every day?

BEN

I'll try. I'm gonna be busy, though.

MR. BAK

Experience Korea. You will find there is much to be taught that you will not discover in a classroom.

BEN

Yeah.  
 (They shake hands)  
 I'll see you in a year.

Ben turns to hug Polly.

BEN (CONT'D)

Be cool. Stay in school. Don't do drugs. I'll see you next Christmas. Have a great time at Julliard.

Ben walks towards the security checkpoint, turns around briefly, gives, a bit of a nod, then turns back, and hands his ID and ticket to the person checking people in.

Mr. and Mrs. Bak and Polly watch him as he disappears into the maze of metal detectors and conveyor belts, then turn and walk out of the airport.

CUT TO:

INT. BOEING 747 JUMBO JET - LATER

Ben sits, waiting for his plane to take off. Rows upon rows of bored passengers fill the plane.

CAPTAIN (O.S.)

(Filtered)

This is your captain speaking.  
Welcome to Korean Airlines flight  
15 with non-stop service to Seoul.  
The flight will last approximately  
fourteen hours and 25 minutes with  
our anticipated arrival time being  
2 p.m. local time tomorrow. Right  
now we're just waiting for  
clearance from the tower to take  
off...

Ben rests his head against the side of the plane and shuts his eyes, attempting to sleep.

CUT TO:

INT. INCHEON INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT - DAY

Ben emerges from the ramp connecting the plane to the airport.

Eventually his eyes gaze across a sign, in both Korean and English guiding him in the right direction.

He arrives at baggage claim and picks up two large suitcases.

He walks outside to a taxi and places his bags in the trunk. The cabbie stands next to the car.

NOTE: THE DIALOGUE IN THIS SCENE AND ALL OTHER SCENES SET IN KOREA IS SPOKEN IN KOREAN WITH ENGLISH SUBTITLES UNLESS OTHERWISE NOTED.

BEN

Seoul National University, please.

CUT TO:



## INT. TAXI - LATER

Ben sits in the back of a taxi. As they drive through rural Korea on their way to Seoul, they pass many rice patties and agrarian outcroppings.

As they enter Seoul, skyscrapers dominate the cityscape. Seoul has more skyscrapers than any other city in Asia and it shows; the high-rises surround the car as they drive through the downtown. Bright neon lights from store signs and billboards engulf the car as they drive by.

CUT TO:

## EXT. DOWNTOWN SEOUL - MORNING

Ben walks down a busy street in the wealthy Gangnam-gu neighborhood of Seoul. He passes a variety of parks and streams as he walks, a stark contrast to the massive skyscrapers that make up most of the city.

He eventually reaches the courtyard of the COEX Mall, an underground shopping center. He walks through the open doors into the mall.

CUT TO:

## INT. COEX MALL - CONTINUOUS

The inside of the mall is an attack on the senses. People are packed everywhere, filling the halls, streaming in and out of the multitude of stores, bathed in the light of the flat screen monitors that fill the shopping center.

He makes his way through the mall, passing countless shops, an aquarium, a museum and innumerable other attractions. He reaches some sort of central stage where a group of mostly male, early adult Koreans sit at computers, playing StarCraft.

Television cameras are trained at the event, capturing the death of every Zerg and the mining of every unit of Vespene. A large crowd sits and watch the event on large screens perched throughout the center. Cheers and groans erupt as one player eliminates another.

CUT TO:

## INT. COLLEGE DORM ROOM - EVENING

Ben works diligently at his desk in his cramped room. He is bathed in a neon glow from a light outside of his window.

There is barely room for his bed and dresser, let alone a desk, so he is crammed into a corner sitting at his desk, typing at his laptop.

He is interrupted by a loud knock at his door.

BEN

Hello?

VOICE (O.S.)

This is the police. Open the door

Ben's eyes open wide and he struggles to turn around his chair to look at the door.

VOICE (CONT'D)

Open the door, now.

Climbing out of his chair and onto his bed, Ben makes his way to the door. He pulls it open to reveal two men standing in the hallways, looking at him sternly.

One man, the POLICE OFFICER, is dressed in the blue shirt, black hat and badge typical of the National Police Agency. The other OFFICIOUS MAN is dressed in a black suit and tie.

OFFICIOUS MAN

Are you Bak Jung-Kwan?

BEN

No--well, yes. I go by Ben.

OFFICIOUS MAN

I don't have any record of that. No matter. I am an official from the Ministry of National Defense.

As he introduces himself, the ministry official removes an ID and badge from his jacket pocket and show them to Ben.

MINISTRY OFFICIAL (CONT'D)

I need you to come with me.

BEN

What for?

MINISTRY OFFICIAL

I have a few questions to ask you about your Korean citizenship.

BEN

I can show you my student visa, if that's what you want.

MINISTRY OFFICIAL  
Just come with me, sir.

BEN  
Am I under arrest?

MINISTRY OFFICIAL  
No. Get any IDs or identification papers you have with you and follow me.

The police officer glares at Ben. He turns around and walks into his room, visibly agitated.

He opens a desk drawer, and flips through the papers, looking for his visa. He can't find it. He checks again. Nothing. He tries another drawer and still finds nothing. His shaking becomes more visible.

He looks back at the police officer and ministry official. They stare at him blankly. He returns to the first drawer and looks through it again. Success! It was there all along.

He returns to the door and follows the ministry official down the hall and out of the dorm, trailed by the police officer.

CUT TO:

INT. INTERROGATION ROOM - LATER

Ben is sitting at a table, alone in a white, cinder-block room lit by bright, florescent lights. He looks at his watch. The police officer sits in a chair in the corner of the room.

The ministry official walks by the open door.

BEN  
(calling out)  
Why am I here?

The ministry official walks into the room holding a manila folder and sits down across from Ben.

MINISTRY OFFICIAL  
Your name raised a flag in our systems when you flew into Seoul. From there, we cross-checked your student visa with a listing of American students studying at South Korean universities.

BEN  
What?

MINISTRY OFFICIAL

All males in South Korea must serve two years in the military after their eighteenth birthday.

BEN

But I'm an American citizen. I became naturalized after turning 18. I learned the Pledge of Allegiance and everything.

MINISTRY OFFICIAL

While that may be true, your name still appears on the Korean Family Census Register.

BEN

What does that mean?

MINISTRY OFFICIAL

It is the obligation of the American citizen to inform the Korean government of his or her American citizenship. It's not an automatic process. You're in the register until you specifically tell us you're no longer a Korean citizen.

BEN

Look, I'm sure my dad took care of that. This has to be some sort of mistake or misunderstanding...

MINISTRY OFFICIAL

Your name is Bak Jung-Kwan?

BEN

Yes.

MINISTRY OFFICIAL

You were born in Andong in 1985?

BEN

Yes.

MINISTRY OFFICIAL

Your family immigrated to the United States in 1995?

BEN

Yes...

MINISTRY OFFICIAL

Then there has been no mistake. I have some paper work you need to fill out. I'll come back with it after my dinner break.

BEN

I need to talk to my embassy. Don't I get a phone call?

MINISTRY OFFICIAL

That only applies to people who are under arrest.

(he hands Ben a stack of papers)

The top form acknowledges that you have been conscripted into the South Korean military. It's standard procedure. Sign that one first.

BEN

Look, if I'm not under arrest, I'm not going to sign anything. Can I go?

MINISTRY OFFICIAL

If you don't sign this, and avoid conscript, you will be under arrest and you will be thrown in jail.

BEN

I'm gonna go.

He gets up to leave.

MINISTRY OFFICIAL

Basic training starts in three days in Nonsan. I'm going to see to it that you're there.

Ben walks out of the room.

CUT TO:

EXT. AMERICAN EMBASSY - NIGHT

Ben walks up to the American embassy. The lights in the windows are out. He tries to open the door. It's locked. A sign indicates it won't be open until the morning.

Ben considers this for a moment, then hails a taxi.

BEN  
The airport.

CUT TO:

INT. TAXI - CONTINUOUS

Ben pulls out his phone and dials a number.

CUT TO:

INT. KITCHEN - EVENING

Mrs. Bak stands in front of the sink hand drying a pan when the phone rings. She puts down the towel in her hand, picks up the phone, and holds it to her ear.

NOTE: THE DIALOGUE IN THIS SCENE, AS WELL AS THE FOLLOWING SCENE, IS SPOKEN IN ENGLISH

MRS. BAK  
Hello?

BEN  
Hey mom, it's me.

MRS. BAK  
Ben! I'm so happy to hear from you.  
What time is it there?

BEN  
Uh, it's about 5 a.m.

MRS. BAK  
Ben! You should be sleeping! You  
can call me back tomorrow after you  
get a good night's sleep.

BEN  
Mom, that doesn't matter anymore. I  
have something I really need to  
tell you now.

MRS. BAK  
Oh, well, okay. What is it? Should  
dad get on the other line?

BEN  
That'd be good.

Mrs. Bak puts her hand over the phone and calls out to her husband.

MRS. BAK

Jung-Wook, Ben is on the phone! Why don't you get on the other line. He says there's something important he needs to tell us.

Mr. Bak gets up from his arm chair in the living room, sets down the newspaper he was reading, and walks over to another phone.

MR. BAK

What is it?

BEN

A man from the Ministry of Defense came by my dorm room this evening. He took me downtown, and told me I've been conscripted into the military. I report for duty on Friday.

MRS. BAK

The military! How did this happen?

MR. BAK

He is still on the Korean Family Census Register.

BEN

Yeah... How'd you know.

MR. BAK

I never removed your name from the registry after you were naturalized as an American.

BEN

(angrily)

You, you never removed my name? *Why not?*

MR. BAK

It is important that you retain some connection to Korea.

BEN

Ah. Okay. Right. I see. Mom, did you know about this?

MRS. BAK

No, I didn't, honey. But I'm sure your father had his reasons.

BEN

Clearly he did. And dad, is this just something you forgot to mention before I left?

(Imitating his dad)

Oh son, by the way, there is a chance you could get picked up by the military.

(Back to himself)

Jesus! What the hell, dad?

MR. BAK

I was afraid if you knew you might get conscripted into the military, that you would not want to go to Korea.

BEN /

Gee, really, you thought that? Because, wow, that's a great deduction right there. I'm sorry though, that's not your decision to make.

MR. BAK

Two years spent in the army is a right of passage for Korean males. It turns them from children into men. I had hoped that the time you spent in college would be enough, but it was not. You are still a child. Once your service is over, you will be a man.

BEN

My taxi just got to the airport. I'll call you when I land.

He ends the call and climbs out of the taxi.

CUT TO:

INT. INCHEON INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT - DAWN

Ben walks up to the ticket counter for Korean Airlines. He appears nervous, his eyes scanning his surroundings, his head jerking back every few seconds to look behind him. He greets the woman working behind the counter.

NOTE: THE DIALOGUE IN THIS SCENE, AND ALL FOLLOWING SCENES IN KOREA, RETURN TO KOREAN WITH ENGLISH SUBTITLES



BEN  
One ticket to Washington, DC  
please.

AIRLINE EMPLOYEE  
Can I see your ID please?

Ben hands her his passport.

AIRLINE EMPLOYEE (CONT'D)  
The ticket comes to 1,878,679.50  
Won.

ANGLE ON: Ben hands her his credit card.

CUT TO:

INT. AIRPORT SECURITY CHECKPOINT - LATER

Ben hurriedly passes through the security station. As he passes through the metal detector, it goes off. Ben steps back through the metal detector and removes his metal-buckled belt. He then passes through the detector without incident.

CUT TO:

INT. DEPARTURE GATE B14 - LATER

Agitated, Ben waits for boarding to begin at his gate. Korean CNN plays on televisions in the background.

CUT TO:

INT. AIRBUS A380 - LATER

Ben stuffs his carry-on bag into the overhead compartment above his seat. With a sigh of relief, he sits down in his seat. He puts on his headphones and listens to music.

More people stream onto the plane, and the seats around Ben are filled. The flight attendants begin walking up and down the aisles, assuring that everybody is buckled in. Ben removes his headphones.

Suddenly, two police officers appear at the front of the plane.

Without hesitation, Ben pops off his seat belt and jumps out of his seat.

The officers spot Ben as he races toward the back of the plane.

One officer runs after Ben as the other quickly descends the stairs in the front of the plane.

Ben slides past a flight attendant and jumps down the stairs in the back of the plane.

On the first floor again, Ben pulls open the door to a lavatory and rushes in.

He catches his breath for a few moments.

There's a banging on the door. The officers continue to pound.

Suddenly, the door crashes in, with the police officer stumbling in, his momentum carrying him after knocking down the door.

More officers step inside. Ben looks up, resigned.

CUT TO:

INT. HIGH SPEED TRAIN - DAY

Ben sits on the train, looking out at the countryside pass through the window. Next to him sits the police officer who previously picked him up from his dorm room, reading a newspaper.

Ben gets up from his seat and squeezes past the officer.

BEN

I'm gonna use the bathroom.

The officer briefly looks up at him, then back down at his paper. Ben walks to the bar of the car and enters the bathroom.

CUT TO:

INT. TRAIN BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

Ben closes the door. He stands still for a moment, then kicks the toilet console in front of him. He kicks it again. He grabs at the soap dispenser and tries to rip it from the wall. His body seethes.

Breathing quickly, he punches a wall. He spins around the tiny bathroom, looking for his next target. He sees his reflection in the mirror. Without thinking, he punches the mirror. The glass shatters.

Ben pulls his bloody hand back from the mirror. He sits down on the toilet, inspecting his hand.

BEN  
Fuck. Fuck fuck.

He begins to sob silently.

CUT TO:

EXT. NONSAN TRAIN STATION - DAY

Ben walks from the train station, the police officer following closely behind him. Ben cradles his bloody hand, wrapped in paper towels.

Nonsan is a small agrarian town. Cars on the street are outnumbered by people riding bicycles on the many bike paths along the road.

The officer directs Ben to a barber shop across the street from the train station.

CUT TO:

INT. BARBER SHOP - MOMENTS LATER

An ELDERLY BARBER beckons Ben to sit in his chair. The barber shop is small, decorated with various types of army paraphernalia that hung around the mirror-covered walls. The police officer sits and waits as Ben is being prepped for his haircut.

ELDERLY BARBER  
You come to Nonsan for basic training?

Ben doesn't respond.

ELDERLY BARBER (CONT'D)  
They don't take any nonsense there.

BEN  
I wouldn't imagine so.

ELDERLY BARBER  
It's a joke. Nonsense... Nonsan...

Ben stares at him.

ELDERLY BARBER (CONT'D)  
Forget it.

The barber then proceeds to shave Ben's head with a pair of clippers, cutting his hair down into the typical army crew cut. Ben stares at himself in the mirror with a blank expression after seeing the end result.

CUT TO:

INT. ARMY TRAINING CENTER LOBBY - AFTERNOON

Ben and the police officer enter the intake facilities of the Republic of Korea Army, or ROKA. They get to the back of a line comprised of mostly fathers and their crew-cut sons. The line is silent, the sons accepting their fate without comment.

Sitting behind a plexiglas window in the concrete and cinder block building is a man dressed in the camouflage uniform of the South Korean army.

After speaking with the man behind the plexiglas, the sons leave through a door to the side of the room, beginning their training, while their fathers exit through the back entrance to the facility.

Ben and the officer reach the front of the line and the man behind the window, a SANGBYEONG (corporal), looks up from his paper work and watches the officer escort Ben forward.

SANGBYEONG

You got a runner there, Officer?

POLICE OFFICER

Yes sir. An American at that.

SANGBYEONG

An American? Well, we'll make sure he feels right at home. I can take him from here.

The police officer nods and turns away, exiting the building and leaving Ben standing alone at the front of the line.

SANGBYEONG (CONT'D)

Name?

BEN

Benjamin Bak.

SANGBYEONG

As it appears on the census register.

BEN

Bak Jung-Kwan.

As Ben gives his information, the corporal fills out a form detailing Ben's data.

SANGBYEONG  
Date of birth?

BEN  
10 July 1985.

SANGBYEONG  
Legal place of residence?

BEN  
4943 North Franklin Road.  
Arlington, Virginia. 22201. The  
United States of America.

The sangbyeong looks up from his work and gives Ben a look of disgust but copies the information regardless.

SANGBYEONG  
Proceed to the right. There you  
will be fitted for your uniform.  
You'll be staying in barrack 7H.  
Report there afterwards. Welcome to  
Hell's shithole, recruit.

Ben, resigned to his fate, shoulders slumped, head downcast, passes through the door to the right, carrying with him a backpack of his few possessions.

CUT TO:

INT. BARRACK 7H - EVENING

Ben enters the barrack apprehensively. A circle of recruits stand in the middle of the long room, cheering and yelling as one recruit holds another recruit in a tight headlock.

Moving to the outer edge of the circle to observe, Ben watches as Ji-Tae tightens his hold Dak-Ho, the huddled recruit.

JI-TAE  
(to Dak-Ho)  
That'll teach you not to spout that  
Yankee bullshit anymore,  
understand?

DAK-HO  
(wheezing)  
But it's the truth.

JI-TAE  
Fuck you and your hard on for the  
American military.

DAK-HO  
George Bush is one of the greatest  
leaders the world has ever seen!

Ji-Tae chokes him further.

Ben pushes forward through the crowd.

BEN  
(in English)  
Stop it!

He stops kicking Dak-Ho to stare at Ben.

JI-TAE  
You're from the United States?

Ben nods.

JI-TAE (CONT'D)  
I should have known you were  
American, you fat fuck.

He seems to have forgotten Dak-Ho, who slowly rises to his  
knees.

Ji-Tae moves closer to Ben. Suddenly, he feigns a quick punch  
to Ben's gut. Ben flinches.

JI-TAE (CONT'D)  
(laughing)  
Better watch out, Rambo.

He walks away. The crowd disperses, leaving Ben and Dak-Ho  
alone.

Ben offers Dak-Ho a hand and pulls him up from the ground.

BEN  
What was that about Yankee  
bullshit?

DAK-HO  
I was just trying to explain the  
benefits of Bush's doctrine of  
preemptive attack. Ji-Tae didn't  
agree. You're American?

BEN  
Unfortunately, yes.

DAK-HO  
How did you end up here?

BEN  
It's a long story.

DAK-HO  
Tell me some other time. We have  
our first roll call at 2100 hours.  
You better get into your gear  
before that. What's your name?

BEN  
Ben.

DAK-HO  
So, Ben from the U.S., tell me,  
when is George Bush going to bomb  
the shit out of North Korea? Soon,  
right? Then we can go home.

CUT TO:

EXT. BARRACK 7H - NIGHT

Ben, Dak-Ho and the rest of the recruits from barrack 7H are milling around outside of their barrack, waiting for the Drill Sergeant they had been told would come to emerge.

Eventually, a man emerges from the darkness, walking from a small, one room building to the side of the barrack. The man, SERGEANT SANG, 47, built like a tank, walks forward in slow, measured steps.

As he reaches Ben and the rest of the soldiers, he stops and examines the men before him. He begins to speak slowly.

SERGEANT SANG  
(composed, measured)  
There have been complaints about  
certain abuses suffered here in  
Nonsan. The Ministry of Defense has  
tried to save face, the director of  
the camp has apologized, promised  
these abuses will never happen  
again. I am here to tell you,  
unequivocally, that they were  
woefully ill-informed.

He begins to pace along the group of men standing idly before him.

## SERGEANT SANG (CONT'D)

Because as long as you worthless children continue to disgrace the honorable name of the military by doing nothing more than entering through the doors here at Nonsan, I will continue to use whatever methods I see fit in order to turn you into soldiers who will uphold the reputation of this institution with approbation and distinction.

The men look back at him, warily.

## SERGEANT SANG (CONT'D)

I know without doubt that upon the end of a day's labor under my command you will return to your barracks and curse my name. I imagine some of your filthy ilk will write letters to your parents, protesting my practices. This is both natural and futile. I will not relent nor will I accept your inevitable weakness. From this moment on, you are nothing more than property of the Republic of Korea Army. And I expect my property to be flawless and without equal.

He surveys the men standing slipshod before him.

## SERGEANT SANG (CONT'D)

I expect my property to stand at attention, in rank, when I speak to them. This is non-negotiable.

The recruits look at each other with confused grins, unsure of their actions. Sergeant Sang eyes them for a brief second, before slowly removing his gun from its holster at his side.

Without hesitation, Sang flips the gun in his hand and cold-cocks the nearest soldier, Min-Sik, in the side of the face with the butt of his pistol. He crumples to the ground.

Sang returns the gun to its holster and focuses his attention back on the group. He now holds the full attention of every soldier. Already they are standing straighter.

## SERGEANT SANG (CONT'D)

When I ask for something to be done, I expect it to be carried out without pause.

(MORE)



## SERGEANT SANG (CONT'D)

Because my previous instruction was perhaps too subtle for you illiterate clods to comprehend, I will phrase it again so that any of you burnouts who have ever watched a war movie will understand:  
ATTENTION!

Without fail, the men quickly form into two lines, standing at the ready, gazing ahead. Even Min-Sik struggles up to join the ranks, a large gash bleeding below his left eye.

## SERGEANT SANG (CONT'D)

Should I ever find you at ease in my presence, the retribution you suffer will be far greater than the blow I have just laid upon your fellow man.

(He motions to the battered Min-Sik)

You training begins tomorrow at 0500 hours. Do not be late.  
Dismissed.

Sergeant Sang turns around and returns to his small bunk house. The men stand at attention, hardly breathing, until his door closes.

CUT TO:

EXT. MOUNTAIN HILLSIDE - DAWN

The new recruits jog along a rocky and treacherous path. Their heavy breaths can be seen in the air. Rays of sun light from a pink sky creep through the trees.

More out of shape than the rest, Ben lags behind. Ben's gray sweatshirt is soaked through. Dak-Ho slows down to run with Ben.

They reach the end of the path where Sergeant Sang waits for them. He looks down at a stopwatch as each man passes him. As they finish, the recruits form into lines, some doubled over, trying to catch their breath.

Sergeant Sang walks over, stopping inches from Ben's face.

## SERGEANT SANG

58 minutes, 28 seconds. This is perhaps the slowest any recruit has ever run eight kilometers at the beginning of training. What's your name?

BEN

Ben Bak.

JI-TAE

He's a fucking American, Sarge.

Sang moves back from Ben's face and stomps over to Ji-Tae.

SERGEANT SANG

Whenever any of you cretins refer to me, you will call me "sir." Not "Sergeant," not "Sang," and certainly not "Sarge." You will begin and end each and every utterance directed to me with "sir." Do you understand?

ALL RECRUITS

(simultaneously)

Sir yes sir.

SERGEANT SANG

You will not speak in my presence unless I have directly addressed you first.

(To Ji-Tae)

Is that clear?

JI-TAE

Sir yes sir.

SERGEANT SANG

(motioning to Min-Sik, a large bruise on his face)

You deserve the same discipline he received last night. In fact, you deserve twice what he received for swearing in my company, which I will not under any circumstances tolerate. But life is inherently unfair, so, just this once, I will let it go.

A victorious smirk creeps on Ji-Tae's face. Ben's eyes turn to slits and his mouth knots in anger.

Sang walks back in Ben's direction.

SERGEANT SANG (CONT'D)

It appears we have a foreigner in our midst. I have no use for an overweight American in my unit.

(MORE)

SERGEANT SANG (CONT'D)

You meatheads have taken over the rest of the world, now you want in on the Korean military. Well I won't stand for it. Everyone else, head to the mess for breakfast. And you, John Wayne, are going to run the path again until you make it in under 55 minutes.

Everybody breaks ranks and all except for Ben begin walking to the mess hall in the distance. Ben turns and slowly begins jogging back up the trail.

CUT TO:

EXT. SHOOTING RANGE - SUNSET

Ben and Dak-Ho walk up to a rack of rifles. Ben hesitates as Dak-Ho reaches for a gun.

BEN

I've never held a gun before.

DAK-HO

I thought all Americans owned guns.

BEN

Oh, I mean I've never held a rifle before. We all own hand guns. Obviously. I've slept with one under my pillow since I was eleven.

DAK-HO

Truly you live in the land of the free.

Ben picks up a rifle and they head over to the range. Targets are set up at the other end of a long field.

Ben lines up his shot through the scope. He pulls the trigger. The bullet misses the target completely.

He grimaces.

BEN

You should know, firing a rifle is much, *much* different than firing a handgun.

CUT TO:

INT. BARRACK 7H - NIGHT

Ben walks to his bunk and finds an unopened envelope lying on his pillow. His eyes widen as he sees that it's written by his sister. He slowly opens the letter, taking care not to rip the envelope.

The letter is written in a flowery script. Ben scans the letter anxiously.

POLLY (V.O.)

Dear Ben. I don't know what to say other than 'shit guys.' I couldn't believe it when I heard what happened. I Wikipedia'd the South Korean military. Sounds like it could be pretty brutal. Mom went ballistic when she found out. Dad's been sleeping on the couch since then. She went to the embassy to see what they could do, which is not much apparently.

A frown appears on Ben's face as he reads.

POLLY (V.O.) (CONT'D)

There's nothing I can say that will make this any better, so I'm just going to talk about other things. Senior year blows. I just want to graduate already. And I'm dating this guy named Owen Oakley. You'd like him, I think. Maybe you'll meet him someday. Well, I need to go practice for the spring showcase. I'll write again soon. Love, Polly.

Dak-Ho walks up behind Ben.

DAK-HO

Who's the letter from?

BEN

My sister. Polly.

DAK-HO

Oh? How's she?

BEN

Good, I think. She has this new boyfriend.

Ben pulls a photo of Polly and Owen arm-in-arm from the envelope and hands it to Dak-Ho.

DAK-HO  
They just got together?

BEN  
I think so. She didn't mention him before I left. Not that she would.

Dak-Ho hands the photo back to Ben.

DAK-HO  
She's pretty.

BEN  
Oh, come on.

DAK-HO  
Prettier than you, anyway.

BEN  
Whatever.

Dak-Ho walks away to his bunk.

Ben stares at the letter for a moment before carefully refolding the letter and putting it back in its envelope. He opens a drawer by his bed and puts the letter inside.

From inside the drawer he pulls out the notebook he received for Christmas. He seems surprised, like he forgot he had it with him.

He opens it up to the first page and begins to write.

CUT TO:

EXT. OBSTACLE COURSE - DAY

The soldiers-in-training from 7H make their way through the various barriers and hurdles of the course as a light snow falls. They scale walls, swing across monkey bars, step through tires. Ben pulls up the rear of the group.

All the while, Sang sits at the end of the course muttering as each recruit finishes.

SERGEANT SANG  
Dreadful... abhorrent...  
atrocious...

CUT TO:

## EXT. SNOW-COVERED FIELD - DAY

In knee-deep snow, the recruits have been divided into rugby teams. In the bitter cold, they play without their shirts, the teams differentiated by the color of bandana worn on their head.

CUT TO:

## EXT. OBSTACLE COURSE - DAY

The men continue through the obstacles and flurries of snow. They crawl under barbed wire fences, swim through pits of mud, run across balance beams. Ben appears to be in the middle of pack.

Still, Sergeant Sang mutters at those who pass him.

SERGEANT SANG

Pathetic... deplorable...  
shameful...

CUT TO:

## EXT. SNOW-COVERED FIELD - DAY

The rugby games continues. Ben and Dak-Ho are on one team; Ji-Tae and Min-Sik on the other. Whenever Ben carries the ball, the opposing team appears to make an extra effort to knock him to the ground. It's brutal.

The players are covered in snow. Most faces are barely discernible through the layer of snow caked on each player's face.

Sang stands off to the side wearing a heavy jacket and gloves, watching the game intently.

CUT TO:

## EXT. MOUNTAIN HILLSIDE - DAY

Back to Ben running alone on the mountain path. He jumps over streams, over branches in the path, anything to save time.

As he approaches the finish line, he see Sang glance at his stopwatch, then look up shaking his head. Ben doesn't acknowledge him as he passes, he just begins the course again.

CUT TO:

EXT. SNOW-COVERED FIELD - DAY

The rugby match becomes even more bitter and barbaric. Ben is continually crushed crushed crushed into the frozen ground. His team, the blue bandanas, score. They hoot and holler -celebrate- in the snow. The game continues.

CUT TO:

EXT. OBSTACLE COURSE - AFTERNOON

It's springtime. The snow has melted, the sun is out. Ben climbs a giant rope ladder. His muscles bulge in a way they didn't seem to previously. His face appears leaner, his cheekbones more pronounced.

To the side, Sergeant Sang sits silently in the shade of a tree. As he watches the trainees complete the obstacle course for what must be the hundredth time, he sips on a plastic bottle of strawberry flavored milk.

CUT TO:

EXT. SNOW-COVERED FIELD - DAY

Sang blows his whistle. The match is over. Cheers erupt from the blue team. Ben gets up from the ground, a stream of blood flowing from the side of his head.

SERGEANT SANG

You competed in this game, playing  
bare-chested in the dead of winter,  
in order to strengthen your  
resolve...

CUT TO:

EXT. MOUNTAIN HILLSIDE - AFTERNOON

Ben easily jogs along the wooded path, this time dressed in shorts and a T-shirt suitable for the spring weather.

SERGEANT SANG (V.O.)

...In order to stamp out  
weakness...

CUT TO:

EXT. OBSTACLE COURSE - AFTERNOON

Ben crawls on his stomach through a tiny underground tunnel. When he emerges, he grabs a rope stretched taut across a small, man-made ravine, and pulls himself hand over hand across the gully while hanging beneath the rope.

Sang looks on, continuing to drink his strawberry milk.

SERGEANT SANG (V.O.)  
 ...However, only today's victors  
 have proven themselves as  
 conquerors of their own fragility,  
 of their decrepitude...

CUT TO:

EXT. SNOW-COVERED FIELD - DAY

The players gather around Sergeant Sang as he speaks, the blue team giddy from their victory.

SERGEANT SANG  
 ...The losers have shown they still  
 possess weakness within them. This  
 frailty must be removed, as a  
 cancerous tumor would be cut out  
 from your body.  
 (Beat)  
 Red team: remove your clothes.

A look of shock and horror passes across the faces those in red bandanas. Ji-Tae begins to shake from a combination of both cold and anger.

JI-TAE  
 (muttering to Min-Sik)  
 This is your fault. If you hadn't  
 missed all those tackles--

SERGEANT SANG  
 (reaching down to his  
 holster)  
 I had hoped you would not need a  
 reminder regarding following  
 orders. Now. Losers. You will  
 remove all of your clothes and pose  
 here in the snow in positions of  
 shame and guilt and weakness until  
 I decide you are strong enough to  
 come inside.

He flips his gun in his hand. As if on cue, the reds reluctantly begin pulling off their boots, then their pants.

As they slowly undress, Ben and his fellow teammates return to their bunk, leaving the losers as they assume positions of heads bowed in shame.



Ben and Dak-Ho exchange quick glances of concern for their left behind comrades before breaking out into smiles as they gaze upon Ji-Tae's misfortune.

CUT TO:

EXT. SHOOTING RANGE - DAY

There isn't a cloud in the sky, it's a perfect spring day. Ben lays on the ground, next to Dak-Ho, gazing into the scope of his sniper rifle. He fires a shot. The shell hits the target sitting hundreds of yards away, missing the bulls-eye.

BEN

Dammit.

DAK-HO

Imagine that's Saddam you're firing at Saddam. Then you'll hit it.

BEN

Why him?

DAK-HO

He attacked America, right? Don't you hate him?

Dak-Ho fires and hits the bulls-eye.

BEN

I guess. I'd rather be firing at Bush though, he's done more harm.

DAK-HO

How can you joke about killing your President?

Ben reloads his rifle.

BEN

Well, *my* President hasn't done much to get me out of this mess, so I guess we're not that tight right now.

DAK-HO

Still, George Bush is a great man. If he's assassinated, the terrorists win.

BEN

I don't understand your obsession with that man.

DAK-HO

My father was in the military. He was stationed at the DMZ. One night he was captured by soldiers from the North. They tortured and killed him. George Bush says that the North Koreans are in the Axis of Evil. America laying waste to Pyongyang like they did Baghdad is the best hope of retribution my family has. Your president is our best hope.

BEN

Well, the way things are going, you probably don't have long to wait.

He takes a shot. Bulls-eye.

CUT TO:

INT. BARRACK 7H - EVENING

The recruits are sitting on their bed mats, some reading, some cleaning their guns, some writing letters to people back home. Ben is absentmindedly rubbing his rifle down with a cloth rag.

He doesn't notice as Ji-Tae leaves the bathroom at the end of the hall, a devilish grin on his face.

Sergeant Sang bursts into the barrack, cutting Dak-Ho short. Everybody immediately drops whatever they are doing and stands at attention.

SERGEANT SANG

Time for inspections. Let's see if you pigs have changed at all since I last inspected the barrack.

He slowly walks down the row of trainees standing at the ready, making brief comments as he goes.

SERGEANT SANG (CONT'D)

Park, the shoe laces on your left boot are untied. In combat, that boot would fall off, and you would be forced to defend yourself with one bare foot... Lee, your bedding mat is improperly made...

He continues on down the line until he reaches the bathroom at the end of the hall. He enters the bathroom briefly before slowly emerging back into the common area.

SERGEANT SANG (CONT'D)

Who, may I ask, is on latrine duty this week?

BEN

Sir, Min-Sik and myself are on latrine duty this week, sir.

SERGEANT SANG

It is my unfortunate duty, then, to inform the two of you that you have wholly failed at your jobs. Floating in the commode in the first stall of my bathroom is a large quantity of what is very clearly human excrement, feces. This type of lax waste removal is so far beyond my limits of good taste I can barely contain my rage.

BEN

Sir, I cleaned the latrines on schedule at 1100 hours--

MIN-SIK

And I was not scheduled to clean them again until 2300 hours, sir.

SERGEANT SANG

I do not care for your insufficient excuses. It is your duty to insure the cleanliness of this barrack at all times. At this, you have failed. Bring a bucket from the storage closet.

Ben walks off and returns with a plastic bucket.

SERGEANT SANG (CONT'D)

Now, enter the stall and remove the excrement in the bucket. Bring it here for all to see.

BEN

Sir, couldn't we just flush it, sir?

SERGEANT SANG

No, assuredly not. I must be absolutely certain that neither the two of you nor anybody else repeat this gross violation of conduct. Go.

Ben and Min-Sik turn around and walk into the bathroom. The rest of the recruit share uncomfortable glances, except for Ji-Tae, whose face holds a look of satisfaction.

Ben and Min-Sik return from the bathroom, their faces slightly wrinkled in disgust, both trying to distance themselves as much as possible from the bucket Ben carries. They set the pail down in front of Sang.

SERGEANT SANG (CONT'D)

Now, eat it. Eat your failure.  
Store it inside you where it will  
never manifest itself again.

BEN

(attempting to restrain  
his revulsion)  
Sir, I respectfully decline, sir.

SERGEANT SANG

This is not something that is your  
decision to make. Eat. Now.

MIN-SIK

No sir.

Sang removes his gun from his holster and points it at Ben's head.

SERGEANT SANG

Insubordination will not be  
tolerated under my command.

BEN

I can't. You are asking me to do  
something that goes against every  
shred of human decency. Sir.

Sang cocks the gun.

SERGEANT SANG

I'd be doing the military a favor  
by executing you sorry American  
excuse for a soldier. My superiors  
would thank me. Just give me a  
reason, Yankee.

Ben and Min-Sik glare into Sang's fiery eyes. He stares right back at them. His finger clenches the trigger.

Ben looks off into space, doing everything he can to hold back his gag reflex. He reaches his hand into the bucket. Min-Sik follows his lead.

Sang watches with grim satisfaction. The rest of the recruits look like they want to vomit.

CUT TO:

INT. BARRACK BATHROOM - LATER

Ben and Min-Sik stumble in separate stalls and vomit in unison. After their retching is complete, they gather some cleaning supplies and scrub each of the toilets.

CUT TO:

EXT. SHOOTING RANGE - DAY

Ben, Dak-Ho, Ji-Tae and Min-Sik lay on the ground, staring into the scopes of their sniper rifles. Ben and Min-Sik look a shade paler than they did previously.

Just as Ben is about to pull the trigger of his rifle, Ji-Tae leans over to talk to him.

JI-TAE

How did my shit taste, asshole?

Ben, distracted, misses the target by a large margin. He ignores the comment and prepares to fire another shot.

JI-TAE (CONT'D)

(to Min-Sik)

I made sure to eat lots of corn for dinner last night. Didn't digest very well, did it?

Min-Sik appears agitated, his hands shaking slightly as he reloads his gun.

MIN-SIK

Fuck off.

JI-TAE

Hey man, it's just curiosity. I've never eaten my own shit; I wanted to get the low down from somebody who has.

Ben notices Ji-Tae giving Min-Sik a hard time.

BEN

I'd eat less fiber if I were you. I think it'd help with the constipation.

Ji-Tae whips his head around to face Ben.

JI-TAE

Whoa, looks like the American has grown a pair.

He glances around and sees Sergeant Sang watching over them. He continues talking as he aims his gun.

JI-TAE (CONT'D)

I know the Yankee cliché is to ask if you'd "like to take this outside," but since we're already here in the beautiful outdoors, it doesn't really apply.

BEN

I'm really hoping you're about to suggest we duel pistols at dawn. Because my answer's "yes."

Min-Sik stares ahead angrily.

MIN-SIK

(muttering)

I can stand up for my own fucking self.

JI-TAE

No. We fight hand to hand, the way men do. Tonight, at 0230 hours, meet me outside the barrack. You're gonna have to pray to channel some serious John Wayne shit if you want to make it through the night.

Ben stares into his scope and fires a bull's-eye.

CUT TO:

INT. BARRACK 7H - NIGHT

Ben's wrist watch changes to 2:30. It begins to beep. He turns it off casually, not having been asleep. He gets up from his mat and changes into his uniform. Around him, other recruits sit up and watch.

Ben heads for the back door of the barrack. Dak-Ho and a handful of other recruits follow him. Min-Sik remains in bed, staring at the ceiling.

CUT TO:

EXT. BARRACK 7H - CONTINUOUS

Ben, trailed by his followers, exit the barrack into the crisp night air. Ji-Tae stands waiting for him.

Ji-TAE  
 Shirt off, motherfucker. Let's see  
 those rippled abs.

Ben stares at him for a brief moment before beginning to unbutton his camouflage jacket. He then takes off the white tank top he wears under the coat.

The crowd forms a circle around Ji-Tae and Ben. Dak-Ho looks on, concerned. Ben appears nervous.

Ji-Tae hops up and down excitedly, shaking his arms. He settles down and advances on Ben. Ben digs his heels into the ground and raises his fists.

Suddenly, the door to the barrack bursts open, and Min-Sik emerges holding his rifle. His eyes are wide open, taking in the scene around him.

Ji-Tae and Ben stop their advances, turning along with everybody else to look at Min-Sik.

MIN-SIK  
 This is my fight.

Everybody stares at him, not daring to look away. He raises his rifle and points it at Ji-Tae.

MIN-SIK (CONT'D)  
 I don't need you to stand up for  
 me, Ben! I can handle myself. I'm  
 going to finish this. This is my  
 fight.

Min-Sik lines up his shot, gun trained at Ji-Tae's chest. Ji-Tae stares back, smirking, unbelieving, infallible. Ben backs up next to Dak-Ho.

DAK-HO  
 You have to stop him. He's going to  
 shoot him.

BEN  
 He has a gun.

DAK-HO  
 He'll listen to you.

Ben doesn't say anything.

DAK-HO (CONT'D)

He's going to kill him!

Ben hesitates.

BEN

Min-Sik?

Min-Sik pulls the trigger. Bullets spray from his rifle. Ji-Tae immediately falls to the ground, multiple wounds bleeding from his chest.

Min-Sik doesn't relent after firing upon Ji-Tae. He turns the gun on the circle of people gathered for the fight, firing randomly into the group. Multiple recruits fall. Ben and Dak-Ho dive to the ground, finding shelter behind an adjacent barrack.

With most of the recruits either bleeding on the ground or crouched behind shelter, Min-Sik stands alone, framed in the doorway of the barrack.

Awoken by the gunshots, Sergeant Sang stampedes from his barrack, wearing Army-assigned pajamas. Nonplussed, he gapes at the scene before him.

Momentarily, Min-Sik surveys what he has done. Then, without hesitation, he turns the gun around and puts the barrel in his mouth. He pulls the trigger as Sergeant Sang looks on.

CUT TO:

EXT. TARMAC - DAY

Rows of chairs are set upon an expansive blacktop typically used for helicopter landing exercises. A podium sits upon risers in front of the columns of chairs.

Many civilians are milling about the tarmac, congratulating their sons for successfully completing basic training.

Sergeant Sang and the recruits from his unit stand off to the side, away from the parents and other people. Their numbers have thinned; the absence of Ji-Tae, Min-Sik and others is noticeable.

SERGEANT SANG

If you think I will give you words of wisdom to carry with you now that your service in the military truly begins, you are mistaken. Each man must find his own way; he must not get by on the advice of others.

(MORE)



## SERGEANT SANG (CONT'D)

Now that your service begins, you will come to realize that your comrades who have left us were lucky. They were good soldiers, and that means that those of you who remain will have to be twice as strong, twice as hard. We are weaker in their absence and their presence on the battlefield will be missed.

He looks down at a sheet of paper in his hands.

## SERGEANT SANG (CONT'D)

I have your stations listed here.  
 Bak: You're in Ground Operations Command, the 27th Infantry division. I hope they know they've got an All-American coming in.  
 Park: you're in GOC, too, with Bak...

Ben and Dak-Ho glance at each other. If looks could talk, their expressions would be saying "well buddy, looks like we're headed to the shit."

FADE TO BLACK.

TITLE ON: PART II

The strings of a violin concerto swell.

CUT TO:

INT. CONCERT HALL - EVENING

TITLE ON: ONE YEAR LATER

Polly plays violin on stage with an orchestra behind her to a packed auditorium.

Mrs. and Mrs. Bak sit next to each other, listening to the music, staring straight ahead.

CUT TO:

INT. CONCERT HALL LOBBY - LATER

The Baks stand next to each other, silent, as other parents and their grown children meet after the concert.

Polly emerges from a hallway and walks towards her parents. She hesitates for a moment, then continues on.

Her parents make an effort not to look at the other.

MRS. BAK  
You were wonderful, darling.

POLLY  
Thanks. Dad, I didn't realize you were coming.

MR. BAK  
I did not want to miss your performance. I thought you were very good. I know how difficult that Paganini can be.

POLLY  
Right, yeah.  
(beat)  
How was the drive up?

MR. BAK  
It was fine.

MRS. BAK  
How is your semester going?

POLLY  
It's going good. Listen, I'm starving, can we head out to dinner?

The three stand in silence for a moment before Mrs. Bak nods.

POLLY (CONT'D)  
Great. How about Mexican?

CUT TO:

INT. MEXICAN RESTAURANT - LATER

The family sits stiffly looking at their menus. Mr. Bak shifts uncomfortably in his seat.

MRS. BAK  
How are classes, Polly? It's been so long since we last talked.

POLLY  
They're keeping me busy. I have a lot more work than last semester.

MR. BAK  
How much are you practicing?

POLLY  
Three to four hours each night.  
Like I said, I'm busy.

MR. BAK  
You're keeping your grades up?

POLLY  
I am.

Polly takes a gulp from her glass of water. Mrs. Bak stares straight ahead.

MR. BAK  
I'm glad to hear. School is the most important thing right now. I hope you are not spending time partying.

POLLY  
I go to parties, Dad. There are parties and I go to them.

MR. BAK  
I see.

POLLY  
What is this about?

MRS. BAK  
(interjecting)  
Have you heard anything from Ben?

POLLY  
(beat)  
No. Of course not. You know he doesn't talk to me either.

MRS. BAK  
Do you still send him letters?

POLLY  
Whenever I can.

MRS. BAK  
I'm worried he's not getting our letters. He would have sent us something by now.

POLLY  
I think he's probably still pretty angry.

MRS. BAK  
What makes you say that?

POLLY  
Because I would be angry.

MR. BAK  
He is fine. I doubt he has ever  
been better in his entire life.

MRS. BAK  
I just want to hear something from  
him. Anything.

CUT TO:

INT. DORM ROOM - LATER

Polly closes the door to her room quietly and takes a deep breath. Her roommate is asleep.

She walks over to her desk and turns on a lamp, creating a small circle of light. She opens a drawer and pulls out a stamp-covered envelope. The envelope has already been opened and she pulls a worn letter from inside.

Polly glances over the letter and sets it on her desk. It is from Ben. She pulls a blank piece of paper out from her desk and begins to write.

POLLY (V.O.)  
Dear Ben. So you made sergeant?  
Looks like finally learning to keep  
your head down and follow orders  
paid off. Congratulations. How does  
Dak-Ho feel about being outranked  
by a goddamn American?

CUT TO:

INT. CONCRETE BUNKER - NIGHT

Ben, bulkier, with more muscle sits in a sparse room with three other soldiers. He is writing in his journal. One other soldier is asleep. Two more talk in the corner. Three rifles lean against the wall.

The door opens and Dak-Ho enters carrying a stack of letters, followed by another soldier, KANG JE-KUN, 19, who is wearing black-framed glasses. Ben looks up from his cards.

Dak-Ho salutes Ben.

DAK-HO

Sergeant Bak, I have with me Private First Class Kang, the recruit Lieutenant Ahn said had been assigned to our post.

(aside)

Two more letters, Ben. One from your sister, one from your mother.

BEN

Thank you Corporal Park. Private Kang, I'll be with you in a moment.

Dak-Ho hands the envelopes to Ben, one which he quickly opens and begins to read.

DAK-HO

What's she up to these days?

BEN

Polly?

DAK-HO

Yeah.

BEN

My parents just went to see her perform at Julliard this past weekend. She said it was awkward.

DAK-HO

How's she dealing with the divorce?

BEN

Fine, I think. She doesn't talk about it much.

DAK-HO

I guess I wouldn't either. Maybe I should write her and make sure she's okay.

BEN

Got lots of divorce experience do you, Dak-Ho?

(beat)

Private Kang?

KANG

Yes sir?

BEN

You're joining us straight form Nonsan?

KANG  
Sir yes sir.

BEN  
And how did you find things there,  
Private Kang?

KANG  
Sir, most adequate, sir.

BEN  
I see. Is this your first time at  
the DMZ?

KANG  
Sir yes sir.

BEN  
You don't need to worry about  
saying sir all the time. I get it.  
I'm your superior officer, you  
respect me, let's leave it at that.  
I don't have much use for protocol.

KANG  
Right.

Ben surveys the room.

BEN  
So, you're now stationed at the  
38th parallel. We call this outpost  
Station Shitstorm, because as I'm  
sure you have already surmised,  
we're in the shit.  
(beat)  
That was a joke.

The dozing soldier sighs contentedly in his sleep.

BEN (CONT'D)  
(pointing at the sleeping  
soldier)  
In the corner we have Private Lee.  
You can introduce yourself some  
other time.  
(pointing to the two other  
soldiers)  
Over here we have Corporals Choi  
and Jeong. They're good soldiers.  
Lousy at cards though. Corporal  
Park you've already met.

(MORE)

BEN (CONT'D)  
 Our commanding officer is  
 Lieutenant Ahn, but he stays out of  
 our way most of the time.

Ben checks his watch.

BEN (CONT'D)  
 Okay, time for patrol. Park, Choi,  
 come with us. Kang, you're just  
 about to go on your first patrol  
 along the demilitarized zone.

Ben, Dak-Ho and Choi each grab a rifle. A look of concern  
 passes over Kang's face.

BEN (CONT'D)  
 Is something wrong, private?

KANG  
 Do I need a gun?

BEN  
 Don't worry, the only thing you  
 have to worry about out there is  
 the wildlife. Plus, Private Lee  
 dropped our fourth rifle into the  
 river and we haven't gotten a  
 replacement yet.

The sleeping soldier lifts his head.

BEN (CONT'D)  
 Sorry Lee. Didn't mean to wake you.  
 Jeong, you're in charge until we  
 get back.

Private Lee puts his head down and falls back to sleep.

CUT TO:

EXT. TEMPERATE FOREST - NIGHT

Lead by Ben, the patrol weaves through the shadow filled  
 jungle.

CHOI  
 Where you from, Kang?

KANG  
 Outside of Busan.

CHOI  
 I went to school in Busan,  
 graduated at the top of my class.  
 (MORE)

CHOI (CONT'D)

I never thought I'd be stuck  
patrolling the goddamn DMZ.

DAK-HO

We're coming up on the MDL, Ben.

KANG

MDL, sir?

BEN

Military Demarcation Line, Kang.  
Step over it and you're in the  
North. Don't ever, ever step over  
it.

CHOI

They're always watching.

DAK-HO

They probably have snipers trained  
on us as we speak.

BEN

Ready to pull the trigger if you  
put so much as a toe over the line.

KANG

Is that right?

BEN

Who the hell knows? I still  
wouldn't go over the line though.

KANG

Got it.

They turn around and walk back in the direction they came  
from.

After a while they pass a small concrete structure with a  
gauge-steel door.

KANG (CONT'D)

What's that over there?

BEN

Starting in the 1970s a series of  
tunnels leading here from the North  
were found. The North claims they  
used the tunnels for coal mining,  
but it's pretty clear they were  
built to covertly maneuver troops  
across the DMZ.



Dak-Ho glances at Ben while he speaks. Ben ignores him.

BEN (CONT'D)

This tunnel was found in the mid '90s and was the fourth and final tunnel discovered along the line. Most of the tunnels are tourist attractions these days. This one was just welded shut on the Northern end.

KANG

Just welded? Couldn't they cut through the door?

BEN

Sure. That's what makes what we do important. At least in theory. We patrol this same area three times a day. Everyday. Morning, afternoon and night.

CHOI

It's really our only responsibility here. We don't have much else to occupy our time. Things are pretty boring around here.

KANG

Famous last words, right?

CHOI

I don't think so. If the North was going to attack, they wouldn't go through here in the middle of nowhere.

DAK-HO

Actually isn't the middle of nowhere exactly where they would invade?

CHOI

I don't think so.

KANG

Why not?

CHOI

I just don't think they'd come through here. It's too desolate.

DAK-HO

Really?

CHOI

How should I know Dak-Ho? I'm a fucking Private. Ask the Lieutenant if you want strategy.

CUT TO:

INT. CONCRETE BUNKER - DAY

The soldiers sit bored in their bunker. Ben sits at one end of the table writing a letter. At the other end Lee and Jeong play cards. Dak-Ho and Choi talk quietly in a corner. Kang reads a magazine.

The scene seems to last for a few beats longer than necessary.

CUT TO:

EXT. TEMPERATE FOREST - DAY

Ben and Dak-Ho stand alone in the forest. In the distance, a row of soda cans have been placed in a line atop a fallen tree. Dak-Ho raises the rifle in his. He peers through the scope and pulls the trigger.

A can of soda explodes in a cloud of carbonation.

BEN

This is a goddamn waste. We get two cases of soda a month, one of which, I might add, is Chilsung Cider, and we're using the Coke for target practice.

DAK-HO

That wasn't an insult directed at Chilsung Cider, was it?

BEN

It might of been.

DAK-HO

You should have pride in South Korean brands.

BEN

All I'm saying is that it tastes like ginger ale mixed with a little bit of Sprite.

DAK-HO

And all I'm saying is that this stuff will kill you.

BEN  
It's diet.

DAK-HO  
So it gives you cancer.

BEN  
My mother used to warn me about  
that.

They're silent for a moment then Ben raises his rifle and shoots a can.

BEN (CONT'D)  
It is satisfying though.

DAK-HO  
Especially when you pretend each  
can is a Northern bastard, his  
brain matter exploding every which  
way.

BEN  
Enjoy it, because that's as close  
as you're ever going to get to  
killing one of those motherfuckers.

Dak-Ho doesn't respond right away.

DAK-HO  
I have been thinking about doing  
something.

Ben raises his rifle, only half paying attention to what his friend is saying.

BEN  
Oh?

DAK-HO  
It would have to be a secret. If  
anybody found out...

Another can explodes.

BEN  
Found out about what?

DAK-HO  
I've been thinking about sneaking  
across to the North.

Ben turns in sudden rapt attention.

DAK-HO (CONT'D)

I want to go up there and take one of them.

BEN

What to you mean 'take one of them?'

DAK-HO

Kidnap one of the bastards. Like they did to my father.

BEN

Dak-Ho...

DAK-HO

It's the only chance I'm going to get.

BEN

And what would you do with him after kidnapping him, assuming, improbably, that you somehow are able to drag him back across the border? Keep him in some secret black ops prison?

DAK-HO

I'd hold him as an enemy combatant. Just scare the shit out of him. Nothing serious. Let him know that there are some things that will not be forgotten.

BEN

And then what? You'll just let him go? What happens when he goes back and says he was kidnapped by a soldier from the South? Everything goes to hell, that's what happens.

DAK-HO

So I don't let him go back.

BEN

You start World War three.

DAK-HO

So I kill him.

BEN

Stop.

DAK-HO  
Nobody would be able to prove I  
took him. I'd make it look like he  
just disappeared, a deserter. Do  
you know how many people the United  
States has made disappear?

BEN  
A lot, probably.

DAK-HO  
Exactly!

BEN  
That's not a good thing.

DAK-HO  
So I'd bury the body. There are  
plenty of places where nobody would  
ever find him.

BEN  
Corporal Park, that's enough.

Dak-Ho is finally quiet.

BEN (CONT'D)  
I will not risk open conflict with  
the north just to satisfy your  
revenge fantasy. Go back to the  
barracks and clear your head.  
You're dismissed.

A defiant look in his eyes, Dak-Ho salutes Ben, then turns  
around and walks away.

Ben returns his focus to the line of soda cans. He lines up  
his rifle and fires three shots in quick succession. The  
remaining cans explode in a brown cloud.

CUT TO:

EXT. OPEN PRAIRIE - SUNSET

A sullen Ben leads Kang, Choi and Dak-Ho on patrol. Nobody  
speaks. Dak-Ho brings up the rear of the group, a faint smile  
plastered on his face.

Choi and Kang exchange a questioning glance. Choi gives a  
slight shrug of his shoulders.

They continue in silence.

CUT TO:

INT. CONCRETE BUNKER - NIGHT

The crew sits in the bunker, unnaturally quiet, everybody keeping to themselves, doing their own thing.

They are startled out of their silence when the sound of a branch snapping outside rattles through the room.

LEE  
What was that?

CHOI  
Probably just a goat. Or a bear.

KANG  
There are bears here?

CHOI  
Pumas too.

JEONG  
The zone is so isolated that it's become a wildlife refuge of sorts.

CHOI  
It's nothing to worry about.

KANG  
What if I run into a bear outside?

CHOI  
Then you run. Or shoot it, I guess.

More sounds of rustling leaves and crunching twigs come from outdoors.

DAK-HO  
It definitely sounds like a bear.

JEONG  
They usually stay away from camp though. I've never seen one this close.

He gets up to look out the window.

JEONG (CONT'D)  
Damn. It's too dark to see anything.

CHOI  
There's nothing to see.

Jeong returns to wear he was sitting. Gradually, everybody goes back to whatever they were doing.

CUT TO:

INT. CONCRETE BUNKER - LATER

Ben sits alone in the common room, writing in his journal. The doors from the bunks opens and Dak-Ho steps out. Ben looks up briefly, then quickly returns to his writing.

DAK-HO

Ben?

He grunts in response.

DAK-HO (CONT'D)

About earlier today. I was out of line.

Ben looks up again, keeping his gaze on Dak-Ho this time.

DAK-HO (CONT'D)

I don't actually want to kill a Nork in cold blood.

BEN

Uh huh.

DAK-HO

On the battlefield is one thing, but I couldn't kidnap and murder anybody. I hope you know that. I wasn't thinking. I mean, I don't even know how I'd get across the border in the first place.

BEN

Good. No international incidents on my watch, please.

Dak-Ho nods.

DAK-HO

Good night.

Ben goes back to his writing without a word.

CUT TO:

INT. CONCRETE BUNKER - EVENING

Everybody is in roughly the same place they sat the day before except that Lee is now sleeping with his head down on the table and Kang has moved on to reading a thick novel.

Ben methodically folds his letter, places it into an envelope and stands up.

BEN

Time for patrol. Jeong, I want you to come tonight, along with Park and Choi. Kang, you stay behind and keep Lee company.

Kang salutes and returns to reading his book. The rest of the crew stands up and prepares to head out.

CUT TO:

EXT. TEMPERATE FOREST - NIGHT

The four soldiers creep through the forest silently, all locked and loaded except for Ben who doesn't carry a gun.

Nobody talks as they survey the area, back and forth, searching for the enemy.

They patrol through the prairie.

Something in the distance moves. Ben holds up a hand signalling a halt.

BEN

What was that?

CHOI

Looked human to me, boss.

BEN

Can you be any more specific?

CHOI

Well, if I were a betting man, and I'm not, but I'm saying if I was, I'd wager he was from the North.

DAK-HO

Are you sure?

CHOI

It's just what I saw.

The grass rustles in a different direction.



JEONG  
Got another bogey at 7 o'clock  
sarge!

BEN  
Keep him in your sight!

JEONG  
He's gone, I lost him.

BEN  
Dak-Ho?

DAK-HO  
I've got one to the east!

JEONG  
There he is again!

Jeong, Dak-Ho and Choi each have their rifles trained in a different direction, at shadows shifting in the grass.

CHOI  
What the hell's going on, boss?

BEN  
Can anybody confirm there are just  
the three of them?

DAK-HO  
That's what it looks like from  
here.

BEN  
Okay, everybody together, let's  
take one of 'em. Find out who the  
fuck they are.

CHOI  
Fuck that. We can get all of them  
if we split up.

BEN  
We're not sure how many there are.  
We might be outnumbered. We only  
have three guns.

CHOI  
Look, who knows what they're doing  
out here, but they're alone. We can  
take them.

BEN  
No, it's too risky. Jeong, call it  
in.

JEONG  
I can't.

BEN  
What!?

JEONG  
I can't! I didn't bring the radio  
with me. Didn't think I'd need it

BEN  
Shit, okay, here's what we're gonna  
do--

A gunshot suddenly rings out.

DAK-HO  
Down! Get down!

The crew drops to the ground, disappearing into the knee  
length grass. They're all breathing heavily, scared.

They hear a muttered curse word in the distance. Then, the  
sound of heavy boots pounding against the ground.

Ben grabs the rifle out of Dak-Ho's hands and gets to his  
knees. The first figure that spot is frantically fiddling  
with his gun. The other two figures are gone.

BEN  
(whispered grunt)  
Stay down!

The figure in the distance looks up from his gun and see Ben  
staring at him. He breaks away in a dead sprint, carrying his  
rifle over his shoulder.

With a quick glance back down at his men, Ben takes off after  
the fleeing man.

Dak-Ho jumps to his feet.

DAK-HO  
Go back and get the radio! Call the  
Lieutenant!

He runs off after Ben. The men on the ground look at each  
other and take a deep breath.

Dak-Ho catches up to Ben quickly but the sprinting soldier is gaining distance on them.

The soldier doesn't look back, he's running with purpose, sure of where he is going.

Ben and Dak-Ho begin to fall behind as the terrain turns rocky.

CUT TO:

EXT. ROCKY FIELD - CONTINUOUS

In the distance, the fleeing soldier begins to zig and zag behind large boulders, clearly trying to lose his pursuers.

Ben and Dak-Ho are out of breath. They check behind each boulder, looking for their quarry.

They lost him.

Three quick gunshots ring out. They dive behind a boulder. They stay on the ground for a few seconds, chests pounding.

In the distance, they hear a loud, metallic *clank*.

His rifle ready, Ben slowly emerge from behind the boulder, his eyes sweeping, looking for the source of the gunshots.

He looks down at Dak-Ho and motions forward.

They creep through the moonlight, treading lightly on the stone beneath them. Their target is clearly gone. They continue on.

All of a sudden, they see the same thing in the distance. A steel hatch protruding from the rock. Ben puts his finger in front of lips. *Silence*.

They move to within a few feet of the door. Dak-Ho rests his ear against the door and listens for a few seconds. He shakes his head.

Ben motions him back away from the door. They sit together on the ground. Ben checks his watch: 23:45.

They wait in silence.

FADE TO:

EXT. ROCKY FIELD - LATER

Ben checks his watch. It's been half an hour. He nods at Dak-Ho, directing him to the door. As he stands up, Ben takes his gun.

Dak-Ho walks to the door and grabs the wheel-handle protruding from the outside. Ben crouches close, gun aimed at the door.

Dak-Ho begins to turn the wheel. Ben stares through the scope in the rifle.

He looks back at Ben, pauses, then begins to turn the handle again.

Soon he can't turn the wheel any farther. He takes a step back and grabs the handle. Dak-Ho wrenches the door open with all of his strength, letting it fall open.

A stairway leading down into a dark passage way is revealed.

There is silence. Ben lets his guard down. Dak-Ho seems to relax as well, his posture slackening slightly. He looks back at Ben.

Ben shrugs his shoulders.

Dak-Ho hunches down and climbs feet first into the tunnel. A flight of grubby steps lead down to a long, dark, cinder block tunnel.

CUT TO:

INT. INCURSION TUNNEL - CONTINUOUS

Ben follows Dak-Ho down the steps into the tunnel, leaving the hatch open behind him. Their steps echo down the corridor.

As they move farther inward, the light from the moon disappears and their flashlights become the only illumination.

Copper piping and electrical wiring run along the ceiling. Fluorescent lights are placed intermittently, but they long ago burned out.

Their silence continues as they walk for what seems like miles.

Dak-Ho's light shines against a steel door. He nods in Ben's direction. Ben nods back.

Dak-Ho slowly open the hatch, his eyes locked to the crack of light between the door and the frame.

More moonlight is let in. Dak-Ho opens the door farther, not sensing anybody watching them. Soon he is able to stick his entire head out.

He surveys the surroundings. A vinyl-sided building sits off in the distance. Light shines through the windows. Shadows pass in front of the light and dance across the walls.

He closes the hatch and reenters the tunnel completely.

DAK-HO

We're in the North.

BEN

This must be another incursion tunnel we never discovered.

DAK-HO

How long to you think they're been coming to the South?

BEN

I don't know. They'll probably stop for a while now. Play it safe.

DAK-HO

Hopefully they won't realize we followed them.

BEN

We should tell Lieutenant Ahn. This is huge.

DAK-HO

I told Choi and Jeong to go back and radio him. He should be there when we get back.

BEN

Good. Let's get going now before anybody realizes we're here.

They begin walking back through the tunnel in the other direction. As they near the southern end, moonlight shines through the open hatch.

Ben stops suddenly and motions for Dak-Ho to be quiet. Muffled voices are heard in the distance.

SOLDIER #1

Fucking Kim left the door open.

SOLDIER #2

Sergeant's gonna have his ass.

Two North Korean soldiers emerge in front of the open hatch, both with rifles slung over their shoulders. Their dress is reminiscent of 1970s Soviet era uniforms.

Ben trains his rifle on the closest soldier as he makes his descent through the door into the tunnel. He stops for a moment at the top of the stairs and looks down. He squints into the darkness.

SOLDIER #1

Hey, do you see--

A bullet blasts out of Ben's rifle and the soldier crumples to the ground, blood already pouring out of the wound in his stomach.

Dak-Ho looks at Ben with a mix of surprise and horror. The other soldier stands at the door, nonplussed.

BEN

(shouting)

Drop your weapon! On to the ground.

The soldier doesn't respond. He's staring at the man bleeding on the floor.

BEN (CONT'D)

Drop your weapon!

The soldier looks up and stares at Ben. Ben points the rifle squarely at him. The soldier tosses his rifle onto the landing at the top of the steps.

BEN (CONT'D)

Now, onto the ground. Hands on your head.

He follows Ben's commands.

Ben turns to Dak-Ho.

BEN (CONT'D)

Go tie his wrists. And take a look at the other guy.

Dak-Ho hesitantly walks over to the soldier lying on the ground and turns back to face Ben.

DAK-HO

You better stay the fuck down.

Dak-Ho removes his belt and wraps it tightly around the soldier's wrists. He lies still on the floor, not struggling against his bindings.

DAK-HO (CONT'D)  
Yeah, you're not so tough, are you?

The other body continues to bleed. Dak-Ho takes his pulse.

DAK-HO (CONT'D)  
Dead.

Ben nods slowly.

DAK-HO (CONT'D)  
What do we do?

BEN  
Bury him.

Ben suddenly snaps to the ready, as if he has emerged from a haze.

BEN (CONT'D)  
You. Up.

The soldier shakily rises to his feet. Ben motions to the side of the tunnel.

BEN (CONT'D)  
Over there.

The soldier walks over to some piping along the wall. Ben leans his gun up against the opposite wall.

He steps over to the soldier and grabs the buckle on the his belt. He quickly undoes the clasp and yanks the belt out through the loops on the soldier's pants.

Brusquely, Ben spins the soldier around 180 degrees so he is facing the wall. Ben folds the belt in his hands. It appears as though he is preparing to beat his prisoner. Instead, he begins to re-spool the belt through the soldier's pants from behind, so that the buckle is lined up with the soldier's back.

Dak-Ho looks on in curiosity.

He spins the soldier around again so his back is to the wall. Ben takes off his own belt.

He threads one end of the belt between the soldier's belt and pants and loops the other end around a pipe running parallel to the tunnel wall. He tightly buckles the two ends together, in effect chaining the soldier to the piping.

The prisoner tugs at his bindings but they don't give.

Ben walks up to the corpse lying at the top of the stairwell.

BEN (CONT'D)  
(to Dak-Ho)  
You going to help me?

DAK-HO  
(motioning to the  
prisoner)  
You're going to leave him there?

Ben doesn't respond.

DAK-HO (CONT'D)  
What if he gets free? We should  
shoot him.

BEN  
Nobody's going to shoot anybody.

Dak-Ho considers this.

DAK-HO  
But what if somebody comes in from  
the other side and finds him?

BEN  
I don't know.

Ben picks up his rifle and hands it to Dak-Ho, who slings it over his shoulder. At the top of the stairs, Ben picks up the two guns dropped by the northern soldiers and slings both across his back.

They drag the body out of the tunnel by its armpits, leaving a puddle of blood at the top of the stairs.

CUT TO:

EXT. ROCKY FIELD - CONTINUOUS

Dak-Ho and Ben emerge from the tunnel hauling the body behind them, its heavy boots dragging against the ground, leaving tracks in the gravel.



BEN  
If you see a flat, thin rock, grab  
it. We need a shovel.

CUT TO:

EXT. OPEN PRAIRIE - WELL PAST MIDNIGHT

Ben stands waist deep in the grave he and Dak-Ho have dug. He is covered in blood and sweat and dirt. He tosses a large, flat rock onto the ground at Dak-Ho's feet.

BEN  
That's good enough.

Dak-Ho reaches down and helps to pull Ben out of the hole.

In unison they grab the corpse from the ground and drop it brusquely into the grave.

They stand silently for a moment.

BEN (CONT'D)  
I don't feel anything.

DAK-HO  
You will.

They begin dumping dirt back into the hole, pushing it with their feet and hands, whatever is fastest.

Soon all that is left is a mound of freshly turned dirt, very obviously in the shape of a grave. They cover the mound with brush, attempting to do whatever they can to mask what they have done.

BEN  
We need get the other guy.

DAK-HO  
What are you going to do with him?

Ben begins walking.

CUT TO:

INT. INCURSION TUNNEL - LATER

Ben and Dak-Ho lift open the door to the tunnel to find their prisoner just where they left him. He is sagging awkwardly to his knees, the belt chain preventing him from resting comfortably on the ground.

Dak-Ho looks down at the puddle of blood still sitting on the landing.

DAK-HO  
What should we do about all this  
blood?

Ben takes off his jacket and tosses it to Dak-Ho.

Ben begins to unbuckle the belt restraining the soldier to the pipe.

Dak-Ho sops up the blood with the jacket.

DAK-HO (CONT'D)  
There's still going to be a stain.

BEN  
So figure something out.

DAK-HO  
They're going to suspect something  
when two of their men never return.

Ben doesn't answer.

He suddenly pulls the soldier forward by his wrists. He lurches to his feet, and remains silent. He has not said a word since he was captured.

DAK-HO (CONT'D)  
What are we going to do?

BEN  
Hide him.

Ben unslings one of the rifles from his back. He now holds it in his hands at the ready, the way he was taught in training.

With his own rifle, Dak-Ho motions the soldier forward from the wall. Slinking forward, he moves up the stairs until he is right behind Ben. Dak-Ho is following, his gun pointed squarely at the soldier's back.

Ben climbs out through the hatch door.

CUT TO:

EXT. ROCKY FIELD - VERY EARLY MORNING

All three climb out of the tunnel. Ben leads the way, his gun at the ready. Their prisoner follows, looking raggedly ahead. Dak-Ho brings up the rear, his gun pointed at the soldier's back.

As they exit the tunnel, they stop for a moment. Dak-Ho closes the steel door to the tunnel. Ben cringes slightly at the loud metallic clang that rings out in the otherwise silent night air.

They begin walking again.

CUT TO:

EXT. OPEN PRAIRIE - LATER

Ben and Dak-Ho continue to escort the prisoner.

They trudge on across the prairie, through the grass. Nobody says anything.

After walking for what seems like a long time, they arrive at the hatch that their unit passed by on an earlier patrol, the hatch that has since been discovered and welded from the north.

They stop in front of the door.

Ben grabs two of the three handgrips sticking out of the wheel handle and yanks hard counterclockwise. It doesn't budge. He tries again to the same result.

He steps back unworried, his face displaying no signs of surprise.

BEN

Can I have the shovel rock, Dak-Ho?

Dak-Ho unzips his backpack and hands him the rock. Ben turns the rock around in his hands, figuring out the best way to grip it.

Ben lifts the rock a few inches from the handle and gives it a few solid pounds. The handle creaks counter-clockwise ever so slightly. He strikes it once more, and it gives way, groaning forward.

Ben drops the rock and turns the handle the rest of the by hand. He pulls the door open.

Dak-Ho leads the prisoner inside.

CUT TO:

INT. ABANDONED TUNNEL - CONTINUOUS

Exposed rock walls are illuminated only by the moonlight. Everything is damp, the walls appear to be sweating.

Each step into the tunnel creates an explosion of dust on the floor.

The three stand inspecting the tunnel. Ben walks over to one of the lamps jutting out from the wall. He flicks the switch. No light comes out.

Dak-Ho belt-chains their prisoner to a pipe.

BEN  
It's kind of dank in here.

DAK-HO  
Who cares?

BEN  
Just sayin'.  
(beat)  
It's almost dawn. We should head back.

Dak-Ho nods and the two of them head to the open door.

BEN (CONT'D)  
(to the prisoner)  
It's going to be a bit dark in here.

He climbs through the hatch, following Dak-Ho. They slam the door behind them. Inside the tunnel it is pitch black.

CUT TO:

EXT. TEMPERATE FOREST - DAWN

Ben and Dak-Ho trudge through the forest.

DAK-HO  
How long are you going to keep him there?

BEN  
Until we figure out what the fuck he and his people were doing here.

DAK-HO  
What do you think Lieutenant Ahn is going to say to that?

BEN  
We're not going to tell him anything.

DAK-HO  
There'd be less chance of the  
Lieutenant finding out if you  
killed him.

BEN  
That's not going to happen.

DAK-HO  
We could bury just like we did the  
first guy. You wouldn't have to  
worry about him escaping, of  
somebody else figuring out what's  
going on. If you don't, and  
somebody finds out, you could be  
tried for...

BEN  
Tried for what?

DAK-HO  
I dunno, treason probably.

BEN  
Uh huh.

DAK-HO  
We sentenced a former president to  
death for treason back in the '90s,  
you know.

BEN  
Yeah what'd he do?

DAK-HO  
Authorized a massacre that killed  
over 150 people.

BEN  
Right, well stop me before I do  
that.

DAK-HO  
I'm serious Ben. If Ahn finds out  
you'll be dishonorably discharged--

BEN  
--That wouldn't be the worst thing  
in the world--

DAK-HO  
--And then probably thrown in jail  
for a long time.

Ben pauses.

BEN

If we report this to him, he reports to his commander, who tells a general, and pretty soon the President is getting a classified report on these three North Koreans who breached our border. And pretty soon we're going to war with the north, and here we are, stationed at the most heavily armed border in the world. Look, I'm six months from getting out and I'm not going to let the outbreak of war jeopardize that. So if that means lying to Lieutenant Ahn, I'm going to lie. And I'm sorry that means holding one of them hostage prisoner, and I'm sorry... I'm sorry I shot that guy... But that's the way it had to be. That's what I had to do. But I'm not going to do it anymore. We're not savages.

DAK-HO

They are.

Dak-Ho stops walking. They have arrived at their barracks.

Ben walks over to a distinctive looking tree that sits a ways away from the barracks. He places his two northern-issued rifles on the ground at the base of the tree and covers them with leaves.

Satisfied that they are properly hidden, he walks back to Dak-Ho.

A green military jeep sits parked outside. Ben sighs and walks to the door.

CUT TO:

INT. CONCRETE BUNKER - CONTINUOUS

Kang, Choi, Lee and Jeong are sitting in a circle. They look like hell, bleary, sweaty, dirty. They haven't slept.

To the side is LIEUTENANT AHN, mid-50s, standing tall, strong and resolute over the rest of the men.

Ben and Dak-Ho walk into the bunker common room. The most the group can muster is a collective sigh of relief. They slump even further in their chairs.

LIUETENANT AHN  
Sergeant Bak. Corporal Park.

They snap to attention and salute Ahn.

LIUETENANT AHN (CONT'D)  
(brusquely)  
At ease, gentlemen. Glad you're finally back. We worried about you. Your men were out all night searching for you. Where the hell were you?

BEN  
We were pursuing the enemy, sir.

LIUETENANT AHN  
That's what your men told me when they radioed in. They also told me how you foolishly started chasing after them.

BEN  
Just one of them, sir.

LIUETENANT AHN  
I'm sorry?

BEN  
I just chased after one of them.

LIUETENANT AHN  
And Corporal Park chased after the same infiltrator with you.

DAK-HO  
That's correct, sir.

LIUETENANT AHN  
Because you've been gone for so long I can only assume that you caught him and that he's sitting out bound and gagged.

BEN  
That's a negative sir.

LIUETENANT AHN  
Then where the fuck have you been for the past seven hours?

DAK-HO  
We were lost, sir.

LIUETENANT AHN  
(incredulously)  
You were lost.

BEN  
The infiltrator led us into an area  
that we weren't familiar with, and  
we got turned around. We just now  
found our way back.

LIUETENANT AHN  
Did he lead you into the North?

BEN  
I'm not dead, am I?

LIUETENANT AHN  
So you don't have any idea how  
those northern assholes slipped  
into our territory.

Ben pauses for a second.

BEN  
I didn't mean to give the  
impression that they we necessarily  
from the north sir.

LIUETENANT AHN  
But Private Choi told me he thought  
the shooter was dressed in a North  
Korean military uniform.

BEN  
From a distance it did appear  
possible that the intruders were  
from the North, but as Corporal  
Park and I gained ground, it became  
less clear.

LIUETENANT AHN  
Do you agree with the sergeant's  
assessment, Corporal Park?

DAK-HO  
Yes sir, I do.

LIUETENANT AHN  
If these weren't northern soldiers,  
sergeant Bak, who do you think they  
might have been?

BEN  
I wouldn't want to speculate sir.



LIUETENANT AHN

So. I'll go report back to command that they can stand down, that perhaps we weren't attacked by the north last night. They're going to love that.

Ahn walks of the barracks. Outside, his jeep roars to life and the wheel crunch over the gravel road.

The rest of the crew stands up slowly, getting ready to head to the bunks. Choi passes by Ben on his way to bed.

CHOI

Those bastards were from the North and we all know it.

He continues walking without stopping. Ben doesn't respond. Everybody else but Dak-Ho files out of the room.

They head to the bunks.

CUT TO:

INT. CONCRETE BUNKER - EVENING

Everybody is gathered in the common room. With his back to the rest of the men, Ben stuffs a couple of can of Cider Soda into his backpack.

CUT TO:

EXT. OPEN PRAIRIE - EVENING

Ben, Dak-Ho, Kang and Jeong walk through the field on patrol.

BEN

We're going to do patrol a little different tonight.

Kang and Jeong exchange looks.

BEN (CONT'D)

With the recent incursion into our territory it's more important than ever that we keep a vigilant watch on our territory. We need to be sure that our entire border along the DMZ is monitored daily. We're splitting up. Jeong and Kang, you're going to patrol in the eastern sector. Jeong, you know where that is.

(MORE)

BEN (CONT'D)

Dak-Ho and I are going to patrol in the western sector. We'll have a better chance to catch any northern aggressors this way.

JEONG

Where's our rendezvous point?

BEN

Meet at the western tunnel at 2300.  
Happy hunting.

The group splits into pairs and walks in separate directions.

CUT TO:

EXT. ABANDONED TUNNEL - EVENING

Ben and Dak-Ho walk up the tunnel door. This time the handle is easily turned.

They enter.

CUT TO:

INT. ABANDONED TUNNEL - CONTINUOUS

Dak-Ho and Ben descend the steps into the tunnel.

Their prisoner is sagging to the ground, hanging from the pipes, expending all his energy to lift his head and squint into the setting sunlight streaming through the open hatch.

He wearily looks up at the two.

BEN

So what's your name?

The soldier doesn't respond.

BEN (CONT'D)

That's okay. It's printed right on your uniform. Kwon. Judging by your insignia, I'd say you're a corporal.

Kwon remains stone-faced.

BEN (CONT'D)

I guess you wouldn't tell me what the fuck you and your comrades were doing down here, would you?

Nothing.

BEN (CONT'D)  
That's what I figured.

Ben sets his backpack on the ground and kneels down to root around inside. He grabs a pair of handcuffs and a length of rope.

Instead of tying Kwon back up with the belts, he handcuffs him and ties him to the pipe with the rope.

Ben then pulls out two cans of Cider Soda and sets them before Kwon.

Dak-Ho snorts in disgust and begins pacing back and forth.

Kwon grimaces but doesn't move to open either of the cans.

Ben looks up, irritated at Dak-Ho.

BEN (CONT'D)  
Hey, Dak-Ho, mind keeping watch  
outside for Kang and Jeong?

Dak-Ho nods and walks up the steps and out of the tunnel.

Ben sits on the bottom step and stares off into space, occasionally flicking his eyes toward Kwon, who hangs from his bonds, eyes closed, half asleep.

After some time, Dak-Ho yells from above.

DAK-HO  
Here they come!

Ben hurries up the steps.

CUT TO:

EXT. ABANDONED TUNNEL - NIGHT

Ben slips out through the tunnel door and closes it quietly behind him. He can see Jeong and Kang's flashlight beams in the distance.

They meet up with Ben and Dak-Ho.

JEONG  
I wasn't sure you'd be here, we're  
a bit early.

BEN  
We were too. Find anything?

KANG  
That's a negative.

DAK-HO  
Yeah, us neither.

They begin walking back to camp.

CUT TO:

INT. CONCRETE BUNKER - NIGHT

Lee and Choi glance up from their work when the group returns from patrol. Kang and Jeong walk over to them, sit down and begin to chat.

CHOI  
You guys are back early.

BEN  
We did things a bit different tonight. Took less time.

CHOI  
Gee, I hope we do things differently next time I'm on patrol.

BEN  
You can do things however you want, Choi, you're on morning patrol tomorrow. Be ready to go at 0600. If I'm not awake, don't worry. Just go without me. And take Lee with you.

Choi rolls his eyes.

Ben sits down at a table and pulls out some paper. He begins to write.

BEN (V.O.) (CONT'D)  
Dear Polly. Everything is beginning to spiral out of control. I don't know what I'm doing, I don't know what to tell my men. I am lost.

FADE TO:

INT. CONCRETE BEDROOM - NIGHT

Ben stares up at the ceiling as the rest of his bunk mates sleep in the background. He turns onto his side, pounds his pillow a couple of times and shuts his eyes determinedly.

CUT TO:

INT. ABANDONED TUNNEL - EVENING

Ben unzips his backpack. His eyes are bloodshot and he stifles a yawn. Dak-Ho stands watch at the top of the stairs, outside of the tunnel. Kwon sits on the ground.

The cans of Cider Soda are empty.

BEN

Enjoyed the Cider soda, huh?

Kwon glowers.

BEN (CONT'D)

I've always thought it was disgusting.

Ben sits on the bottom step and stares at Kwon, who appears to be thinking deeply to himself.

KWON

It's dark down here.

Ben is startled, he's never heard Kwon speak before.

BEN

What?

KWON

It gets pitch black when you leave.

BEN

What's your point?

KWON

It would be nice to have some light.

BEN

What for?

KWON

My sanity.

Ben considers this. Reluctantly, he reaches into his pack and pulls out a flashlight. He hands it to Kwon.

BEN  
Take this.

Kwon flicks it on and off. He nods at Ben.

Dak-Ho raps his knuckles on the steel door.

DAK-HO  
Ben!

BEN  
(to Kwon)  
Hope that helps.

Kwon stretches out on his back as Ben sprints up the steps.

CUT TO:

INT. CONCRETE BEDROOM - NIGHT

Ben again can't sleep. He tosses and turns and finally gets out of bed.

CUT TO:

EXT. CONCRETE BUNKER - NIGHT

Shutting the door quietly behind him, Ben hurries out from the bunker.

CUT TO:

EXT. OPEN PRAIRIE - NIGHT

Ben walks up to a conspicuous pile of brush on the ground. He pushes the branches aside, revealing the fresh dirt of a grave beneath it.

Ben sits down on the ground beside the grave and stares at the mound.

After a while he fumbles around on the ground and finds a large-ish stone. He places the stone at the head of the grave, a marker.

CUT TO:

INT. CONCRETE BUNKER - DAY

The six soldiers sit around the common room.

Choi isn't paying any attention to the letter he's writing. He slams his pen down on the table.

CHOI

It's been over a week since the skirmish.

Everybody looks up, surprised.

DAK-HO

What's your point?

CHOI

I'm just saying maybe it's time to go back to the old patrol rotation. Morning patrol sucks.

BEN

(half asleep)

What? ...We need an experienced hand in each patrol, Choi.

(quietly)

You don't want Lee making rounds on his own, do you? I'm talking about total catastrophe.

(louder)

Isn't that right, Lee? Total catastrophe?

LEE

That's right, utter destruction, sir.

CHOI

Let me trade with Jeong.

BEN

He knows the new route too well. I need him.

CHOI

What about with Kang?

BEN

Kang and Lee together on patrol? You're joking. The new guy and the guy who wouldn't know his dick from a drainpipe? Why don't you give Dear Leader the missile codes while you're at it?

Choi glares at Ben before picking up his pen again and scribbling furiously on the sheet of paper.

CUT TO:

EXT. TEMPERATE FOREST - SUNSET

Ben and Dak-Ho shoot soda cans. The setting sun streams through the branches, almost blinding.

Three cans are lined up in a row.

DAK-HO

Here we have three enemies of me  
and my family. First is Kim Il-  
Sung, roasting in Hell.

He fires and the first can explodes. Ben looks on.

DAK-HO (CONT'D)

Next is Dear Leader, Kim Jong-Il,  
so close to blowing the entire  
world to Hell.

The second can erupts in aluminum shards and carbonation.

DAK-HO (CONT'D)

Finally we have our own Corporal  
Kwon, putting me through my own  
personal Hell.

Ben raises an eyebrow but doesn't say anything. Dak-Ho fires. The bullet grazes the can and a stream of soda jets out the side.

BEN

Just a flesh wound, huh?

DAK-HO

Maybe he'll bleed out.

BEN

Yeah.

(beat)

I got another letter from my sister  
today.

DAK-HO

What'd she have to say?

BEN

She's apparently been fighting with  
Owen about what to do while she's  
at school. He wants to be in an  
open relationship, she's not so  
sure.

DAK-HO

This is my chance.



BEN  
C'mon, man, she's in high school.  
And like 6,000 miles away.

DAK-HO  
I thought she was in college.

BEN  
Right, yeah. College.

He fires at a can.

BEN (CONT'D)  
You haven't seen my picture of  
Polly, have you?

DAK-HO  
Oh, uh...  
(pulls the pictures from  
his wallet)  
Here.

He hands the photo to Ben. Owen has been cut out of the picture.

BEN  
Wow, umm, you didn't use this to--

DAK-HO  
No, oh no, of course not.

A can explodes on Dak-Ho's shot.

CUT TO:

INT. ABANDONED TUNNEL - NIGHT

Ben hands Kwon a package loaf of bread and a block of cheese from his pack. Kwon eagerly grabs two slices of bread from its bag, then goes for the cheese.

Dak-Ho sits at the top of the stairs, bored, tossing pebbles down into the tunnel, aiming for an exposed pipe.

KWON  
How am I supposed to slice this?

BEN  
I can't give you a knife.

Kwon rips of chunk of cheese from the block. It's jagged and blocky and about as far from a slice of cheese as one could get. Undeterred he places the chunk between the bread and bites down.

A pebble clinks against the pipe. Ben glances up annoyed, then turns his attention back to Kwon.

BEN (CONT'D)  
Next time I'll pre-slice the cheese for you. Like Kraft Singles.

KWON  
(chewing)  
What's Kraft Singles?

BEN  
Big slices of American cheese that come individually wrapped in plastic. They're gross.

Another pebble hits the pipe. Ben ignores it.

Kwon finishes in about three bites. He starts to make another cheese-chunk sandwich.

BEN (CONT'D)  
So where're you from, Kwon?

KWON  
A small village near the Haeju Bay.

This time Dak-Ho's pebble misses the pipe entirely, instead coming close to striking Kwon in the face.

Ben whips his head around to face Dak-Ho.

BEN  
Do you mind?

DAK-HO  
Just keeping the enemy on his toes.

He stops throwing rocks. Ben turns back to Kwon.

BEN  
How are things there?

KWON  
I don't know, I haven't been back since I joined the army.

BEN  
Your family still live there?

KWON  
My mom and sister do. My father died a couple years ago.

BEN

Oh.

He doesn't know what to say.

BEN (CONT'D)

I have a sister, too.

Kwon considers this.

KWON

What are you going to do with me?

Ben pauses for a long time.

BEN

I don't know.

CUT TO:

INT. CONCRETE BUNKER - MIDDAY

Ben is sitting, staring into space. The other men occupy themselves.

The front door suddenly swings open. Lieutenant Ahn walks in. Everybody but Ben stands up and salutes. Ben doesn't seem to notice.

Dak-Ho clears his throat. Ben realizes what's going on and jumps up.

BEN

Lieutenant.

Ahn doesn't acknowledge him.

LIUETENANT AHN

Men, we have reason to believe that the soldiers you encountered previously were indeed combatants from the North. Last night our men in the eastern sector reported seeing intruders on patrol. They didn't engage, but photographic evidence confirms they're northern.

The men digest this.

BEN

What does this mean, sir?

LIUETENANT AHN  
Currently, we are unable to ascertain the enemy's motive. In the mean time, we have orders from Seoul to maintain high alert.

BEN  
The MoD's involved?

LIUETENANT AHN  
I felt it prudent to alert the Defense Ministry, yes.

Ben curses under his breath.

DAK-HO  
How are we going to respond?

LIUETENANT AHN  
When Seoul tells us what to do, we'll know. Until then, I can't comment on any sort of retaliation that may or may not be happening.

BEN  
We're going to attack?

LIUETENANT AHN  
I don't know anything at this point.

BEN  
It's just that if we're going to attack, I'd like to know. Sir. In order to better prepare my men.

LIUETENANT AHN  
You'll know when you need to, Sergeant.

Ben nods.

DAK-HO  
What should we do if we encounter any other intruders, sir?

LIUETENANT AHN  
The time for warning shots has passed. Shoot to kill. Anything less would be treasonous.

Dak-Ho glances at Ben. He does not return the gaze.

LIUETENANT AHN (CONT'D)  
Of course because of the heightened security measures, protocol states you need to file daily reports on your patrols. I'll expect your fax each night.

BEN  
Yes sir.

LIUETENANT AHN  
I'll check back in regardless.  
We've gotta take down these bastards.

Everybody is silent.

CUT TO:

INT. CONCRETE KITCHEN - EVENING

Ben is in the bunker's poorly stocked kitchen. He pulls a couple of cans of soup from a cabinet and puts them in his pack.

Choi steps up behind him.

CHOI  
Taking a hot plate with you too?

BEN  
Huh?

CHOI  
To heat up the soup. Don't know where you're going to find a place to plug it in though.

BEN  
Just thought I might need a snack.

He walks to the door.

Choi opens a drawer.

CHOI  
Hey, Bak.

He tosses a can opener to Ben.

CHOI (CONT'D)  
Don't forget this.

CUT TO:

INT. ABANDONED TUNNEL - NIGHT

Ben and Dak-Ho pull open the door to the tunnel and descend the steps.

Kwon acknowledges Ben with a nod. He ignores Dak-Ho.

Ben opens his backpack and hands Kwon a can of soup, a can opener and a spoon.

DAK-HO  
Okay, this has gone on for long enough.

Ben and Kwon look up, startled.

BEN  
What?

DAK-HO  
You come here everyday, feeding him with our food. It's only a matter of time before somebody realizes rations are disappearing.

KWON  
The food you feed me is terrible. Nobody will miss it.

DAK-HO  
You're insulting our food. We should let you starve.

BEN  
(whispering)  
C'mon, it is shitty food.

DAK-HO  
But it's our food; he acts like we owe him something.  
(beat)  
You know, it's not even that, Ben. It's you. You don't have an end-game Ben. Just like when Min-Sik shot up everybody in basic--you don't have a plan.

BEN  
That's not the same at all.

DAK-HO

Yes it is. You're going to wait around, doing nothing until something forces you to react. That doesn't work for me. I'm putting an end to this now.

He lunges at Kwon and knocks him to the ground.

Ben rushes forward and wrestles Dak-Ho off of Kwon, throwing him to the side.

Everybody's breathing heavy. Ben walks over to Dak-Ho and directs him up the steps.

BEN

Go outside and calm the fuck down.

Dak-Ho exits the tunnel and walks out of sight. Ben sits down on the bottom step as Kwon opens the can of soup. He slowly begins to eat it cold from the can.

BEN (CONT'D)

Sorry about him. That won't happen again.

(moving on quickly)

Uh, so, um, you were a fisherman?

KWON

My father was before he died. I helped him out during the summer. I used to hate it so much. Catching them, then icing them, then selling them all weekend at the market... The stench was so overpowering.

BEN

Are you going to go back there once you get out?

KWON

I'm going to Moscow.

BEN

Why Moscow?

KWON

There's a train that leaves from Pyongyang twice a month. It takes six days to get there. Once you're in Moscow, with the right visas, you can go anywhere.

BEN

You have it all planned out.

KWON

I turn 26 in two months. At that point I'm automatically discharged. I'm going to stop by my home, check in on my mother and sister, then go to Pyongyang and catch the train. I already bought my ticket.

BEN

You're just going to leave everybody behind?

KWON

I'm sick of all of this. I've been in the army for nine years, since I was 17. For that entire time there've been a million soldiers on both sides of the border, guns drawn, your rifles pointing north, our rifles pointing south. There's been no de-escalation, no recess from the tension, no chance to let our guard down. I'm tired, and I'm not sure that I'll ever find rest here.

Ben doesn't respond for a moment.

BEN

What were you doing over here? When we captured you. Spying? Reconnaissance for an invasion? What?

KWON

We were following orders. We don't ask questions of our superiors, no matter how erratic.

BEN

Erratic?

KWON

The Great Leader has been issuing commands directly to the superior officers stationed at the DMZ. At least that's the rumor. It's not our place to debate.

Ben considers this for a moment.



BEN

I felt that way too, once, about not being able to find rest here. Now I don't know. I do know that I can't go home.

KWON

Where are you from?

BEN

The United States.

KWON

America? How did you end up here?

BEN

It's a long story.

KWON

Why can't you go back?

BEN

Let's just say that I haven't spoken to my parents in almost two years and I wouldn't know what to say to them if I saw them again.

KWON

What are you going to do when you're discharged?

BEN

Go back to Seoul, I think. I don't know.

(beat)

I sang acapella in college. Maybe I'll try out for Korean Idol.

KWON

What's that?

BEN

A singing contest on TV.

KWON

Oh.

(matter-of-factly)

How long are you going to hold me here?

BEN

I told you I don't know.

KWON

When are you going to know?

BEN

I'm working on it. It's complicated.

KWON

Well, while you're working it out I'm stuck in here, rotting away. Just make up your goddamn mind. Come up with an end-plan like your friend said. Either let me die or let me go. That's all I want.

BEN

I know.

CUT TO:

INT. CONCRETE BUNKER - NIGHT

Ben sits at a table writing in his journal, filling pages.

Dak-Ho walks in from the kitchen.

BEN

Hey, Dak-Ho, can you write a report on tonight's patrol for the lieutenant?

DAK-HO

Why can't you?

BEN

I'm busy.

DAK-HO

Fine... what do you want it to say?

BEN

Anything but the truth, obviously. Just make it up.

Dak-Ho walks away without saying anything.

BEN (CONT'D)

Just fax it to him when you're done.

CUT TO:

INT. CONCRETE BEDROOM - LATER

Ben climbs out of bed and gets dressed without turning on the light. All the other soldiers are sleeping, except for Choi, who intently watches Ben while pretending to sleep.

CUT TO:

EXT. OPEN PRAIRIE - NIGHT

Ben sits by the grave. Behind him, unnoticed in the trees, Choi looks on.

Choi watches, fascinated, but unsure what to do.

He steps forward.

CHOI

Ben?

BEN

What the fuck are you doing here?

CHOI

(finding his voice)

I followed you here.

BEN

Why the fuck would you do that?

CHOI

Because I knew you were disappearing at night and I wanted to know where you went. And now that I know, I'm going to report you to the Lieutenant unless you take me off morning patrol.

BEN

You're insane.

CHOI

You were the one who spent almost an hour staring at, what looked to me to be a grave. What are you up to Ben?

BEN

I'm not going to tell you anything.

CHOI

Fine, but as soon as the Lieutenant hears about your nighttime strolls its sayonara Ben.

Ben considers this.

BEN  
All you want is to be off the  
morning patrol?

CHOI  
Nothing more.

BEN  
Fine.

CUT TO:

INT. CONCRETE BEDROOM - DAWN

Choi crawls into bed. Ben walks up to a sleeping Jeong and shakes him by the shoulder.

BEN  
Hey, sorry buddy, but you're on  
morning patrol today.

Jeong groans.

CUT TO:

EXT. OPEN PRAIRIE - EVENING

Ben, Dak-Ho, Kang and Choi walk through the field on patrol.

Ben is silent, in deep thought.

BEN  
I'm switching things around  
tonight. Dak-Ho, you're going to  
patrol the eastern sector with  
Kang. Choi is coming with me.

Dak-Ho looks ahead, pissed.

KANG  
Why the change?

Ben takes a long time to respond. He stares at Dak-Ho as he speaks.

BEN  
Because, frankly, I don't trust  
Choi with anybody but myself and he  
knows I'm pissed at him and that if  
he pushes me even a little I'm  
going to cut his balls off.

(MORE)

BEN (CONT'D)

Look, last month Dak-Ho and myself were ambushed by two North Korean soldiers. We had no choice but to take one of the them hostage.

Everybody digests this for a moment.

KANG

So the soldiers were from the North?

BEN

That's correct.

KANG

Permission to speak freely, sir?

BEN

What have I told--fuck yes, I mean, of course.

KANG

Why did you lie to the Lieutenant?

BEN

Because it was easier that way.

Kang doesn't press any further.

BEN (CONT'D)

Anyway, Choi and I will check on the hostage while the two of you continue to patrol as usual.

KANG

Where are you keeping him?

Ben stops walking suddenly. The others stop behind him. They're standing in front of the steel hatch door.

BEN

Right here.

He turns to Dak-Ho.

BEN (CONT'D)

Meet back here after you finish your patrol. And let Kang lead, he's good at keeping cool.

Dak-Ho trudges off behind Kang.

Ben yanks open the hatch, revealing the tunnel.

Choi steps through the door.

CUT TO:

INT. ABANDONED TUNNEL -- CONTINUOUS

Ben and Choi descend the steps into the tunnel.

Ben sits down against the wall opposite Kwon, who hasn't moved from his spot on the ground.

BEN

Choi, go outside and keep a lookout for Dak-Ho and Kang.

CHOI

But they just left.

BEN

That's right.

Choi walks back up the steps. Ben watches until he's out of sight.

He and Kwon sit in silence for a long moment. Ben stares straight ahead, unfocused, lost in his thoughts.

BEN (CONT'D)

The guy that I shot. What was his name?

KWON

Corporal Paik. Paik Ki-Ok.

BEN

Did you know him well?

KWON

We served together for the past five years.

BEN

Was he married?

KWON

He was conscripted at seventeen and served in the People's Army ever since. He didn't have anybody, he never had a chance. The only people in his life aside from his comrades were his parents and brother, but he hadn't seen them for years. And now he's going to be alone forever.

Ben plays with some dirt on the ground. He doesn't look up.

BEN

It was an accident, you know. I didn't mean to.

KWON

It was obvious.

BEN

If there was a way, I would write to his parents. I don't know what I'd tell them, but I'd say something.

KWON

If there was a way.

They sit in silence.

BEN

You should come live in the South. Forget Moscow, be among your people. I could sneak you across the border, get you to a refugee center. The government would set you up with a stipend and a place to live.

KWON

No.

BEN

Why not? You'd know the language, I could help you get started.

KWON

When I was a boy my father escaped across the border to China, trying to find a better life for my family in South Korea. He walked across the frozen waters of the Tumen River. He found sanctuary in a church and arranged train travel to southern China, where he crossed the border on foot into Laos. He trudged over mountains and slogged through jungles and crossed the Mekong into Thailand.

(MORE)

KWON (CONT'D)

There he was packed into a tiny, one-room immigration detention center with hundreds of other refugees, all waiting for authorization to emigrate to South Korea, bodies on top of bodies. For months he was forced to stand against a wall all day and sleep in a toilet stall at night. There was no room for any better livelihood than that. He died waiting to hear from the government. So no, I do not want to travel to the country whose promise lead to my father's death.

BEN

Maybe he would want you to follow in his footsteps.

KWON

I could never live in South Korea.

Ben silently nods his head

CUT TO:

EXT. OPEN PRAIRIE - NIGHT

Choi paces back and forth outside the tunnel. The voices from inside are inaudible. He rubs his hands together for warmth.

Heavy pounding of feet bring him to attention. A shadow in the distance is rushing toward him.

Choi readies his rifle.

The shadow is in his sight.

The figure passes into the moonlight.

KANG

Choi! Choi! Get Ben! They took Dak-Ho!

CUT TO:

INT. ABANDONED TUNNEL - CONTINUOUS

Ben and Kwon are still sitting in silence when Kang and Choi crash in through the door.



KANG

Ben--Sergaent Bak! Dak-Ho! I mean,  
Corporal Park--they took him!

Ben springs to his feet.

BEN

What do you mean? What happened?  
Who took him?

KANG

We were patrolling over in the  
eastern sector when it happened.

CUT TO:

EXT. TEMPERATE FOREST - NIGHT

Dak-Ho and Kang are walking through the woods, rifles at the ready, but joking with each other.

KANG (V.O.)

We hadn't noticed anything out of  
the ordinary all night. Then out of  
nowhere three men with guns,  
wearing People's Army uniforms  
appeared, surrounding us.

Three soldiers appear from the shadows with their rifles drawn. Dak-Ho and Jeong stop in their tracks.

KANG (V.O.) (CONT'D)

We didn't know what to do. They  
told us to drop our guns and put  
our hands in the air.

Kang bends down slowly and sets his rifle on the ground. He looks up at Dak-Ho, who nods slightly in response. Dak-Ho slowly begins to lower his gun.

KANG (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Dak-Ho feigned setting down his  
rifle, but instead slammed one of  
them in the knee with the gun.

Dak-Ho jabs at one of the soldiers with the butt of his rifle. The soldier grunts in pain and falls to one knee.

KANG (V.O.) (CONT'D)

We both started running.

Kang and Dak-Ho both begin sprinting back in the direction they came from as the two other soldiers are for a moment distracted.

KANG (V.O.) (CONT'D)  
 Dak-Ho was a step behind me. The  
 soldiers reacted quickly. They  
 tripped him and he fell.

Dak-Ho falls to the ground. Kang looks glances back over his  
 shoulder.

KANG (V.O.) (CONT'D)  
 He told me to run.

DAK-HO  
 Go! Tell Ben!

Kang hesitates for a second as the two standing soldiers rush  
 to keep Dak-Ho on the ground. He turns and runs and gets  
 away.

KANG (V.O.)  
 He told me to go and tell you what  
 happened.

CUT TO:

INT. ABANDONED TUNNEL - NIGHT

Ben is stone-faced.

BEN  
 How much time has past since he was  
 taken?

KANG  
 Only as much time as it took me to  
 run here, twenty minutes.

BEN  
 (to himself)  
 Too late to intercept...  
 (louder)  
 Okay, here's what we're going to  
 do. Private Choi, Private Kang,  
 hurry back to base. Wait for my  
 instruction there.

CHOI  
 I'll call the Lieutenant.

BEN  
 No. Don't do anything.

KANG  
 What are you going to do?

Ben flicks his eyes to Kwon who is listening intently.

BEN  
I'm going to find out where Dak-Ho  
has been taken. I'll meet you back  
at the bunker when I'm done.

KANG  
Yes sir.

CHOI  
Yes sir.

Choi and Kang hurry out of the tunnel.

Ben turns to Kwon.

BEN  
Where's Dak-Ho?

KWON  
I don't know.

BEN  
Where did they take him?

KWON  
How should I know?

BEN  
Tell me where he is!

KWON  
I've been tied up here for the past  
month. How do you expect me to  
know?

BEN  
Where do you take your hostages?

KWON  
What hostages do you think we've  
taken? Had any of your men  
disappeared before tonight? Have  
you heard of any South Korean  
soldiers mysteriously disappearing?

BEN  
I've heard rumors.

KWON  
We don't have prisons, we have  
shacks that just barely have  
electricity.

BEN

I just want to find my friend, and your comrades have him, and you're going to help me find him. So you need to start talking.

KWON

I don't know what to tell you.

Ben pauses for a long time, his brow furrowed.

BEN

I guess I had better tie you back up to that pipe.

CUT TO:

INT. INTERROGATION ROOM - NIGHT

His hands tied behind his back, Dak-Ho sits on a stool in the middle of a windowless concrete room. His face is caked with dirt and a little blood. Two soldiers stand over him.

INTERROGATOR #1

Two of our men never returned.  
Where are they?

DAK-HO

I don't know what you're talking about.

INTERROGATOR #2

They disappeared while on your soil. We know you have them.

DAK-HO

Maybe they deserted, escaped to the South.

INTERROGATOR #2

How dare you impugn the honor of those men.

INTERROGATOR #1

They were loyal soldiers, devoted to our Great Leader.

INTERROGATOR #2

So why don't you get serious and tell us what you did to Corporals Kwon and Paik.

DAK-HO

I don't know anything.

The two interrogators whisper back and forth briefly.  
Interrogator #2 walks out of the room.

INTERROGATOR #1

He's going to get Private Kim. Do you know him? It's the damndest thing. Private Kim returned to base last month all out of breath, claiming he had been chased all the way back by two South Korean soldiers. The People's Army feels it's likely that whoever chased him also knows the whereabouts of our men. We're going to see if he recognizes you.

Dak-Ho sits on the stool, not saying anything.

The door opens and in walks Interrogator #2 with Private Kim. He and Da-Ho stare at each other for a brief moment.

PRIVATE KIM

That's him. He was one of the men chasing me. I'm sure of it.

The two interrogators turn to Dak-Ho.

CUT TO:

INT. ABANDONED TUNNEL - NIGHT

Kwon is hanging by his wrists, bound by a belt tied to a pipe running along the ceiling.

Ben has removed his jacket, stripped down to his undershirt. He paces back and forth in front of Kwon.

BEN

Fuck!

KWON

Let me go.

BEN

I can't. Not yet.

KWON

Just do it.

BEN

I have to find my friend.

KWON

Then kill me.

BEN

What?

KWON

I know you want to. It would make everything easier.

BEN

Shut up.

KWON

And now more people know about me. More chances for things to go wrong. More chances for you to get found out. Killing me would solve all your problems.

BEN

It wouldn't bring Dak-Ho back.

Ben's anger is barely contained. He's steaming.

KWON

It's your fault I'm here--

BEN

Please--

KWON

And it's your fault Dak-Ho was kidnapped.

BEN

No--

KWON

It's your fault my friend is dead!

BEN

Ahhhhh!

Ben pulls a knife out from his belt and lunges toward Kwon.

He slices the rope holding Kwon up. Kwon crumples to the floor.

BEN (CONT'D)

I'm going to get you out, whatever it takes.

(beat)

But I need your help.

KWON

Why should I help you?

BEN

Because I'm going to get you on  
that train. No matter what else  
happens, you're going to be on it.

(beat)

Let me help you up.

CUT TO:

EXT. ABANDONED TUNNEL - MIDNIGHT

Kwon leans on Ben's shoulder for support. They lurch over the  
threshold from the tunnel into the night.

Step by step they begin to walk.

CUT TO:

EXT. OPEN PRAIRIE - NIGHT

Kwon is placing almost all of his weight on Ben. They move  
slowly. They move forward.

CUT TO:

EXT. TEMPERATE FOREST - NIGHT

They don't talk, they just look ahead and down, careful to  
avoid tripping over roots.

CUT TO:

EXT. CONCRETE BUNKER - NIGHT

They approach the station slowly. Ben glances at Kwon who  
grimaces in return. Ben takes a deep breath and opens the  
door.

CUT TO:

INT. CONCRETE BUNKER - CONTINUOUS

Lee, Jeong, Choi and Kang, seated in a circle, jump to their  
feet in surprise when Ben and Kwon enter.

CHOI

What the hell is he doing here?

Ben doesn't respond. Instead he leads Kwon to a chair that he  
promptly collapses into.

JEONG

What's going on, Ben? Why aren't we contacting the Lieutenant? What are we going to do about Dak-Ho?

BEN

(to Choi)

He's going to lead us on our rescue mission.

JEONG

He could lead us right into a trap.

BEN

We don't have any idea of the layout of North Korea's outpost. Without him, we would be going in completely blind. Either way, the North is going to expect our raid. I'd rather go in knowing what we're up against.

CHOI

And who exactly is going on this suicide mission?

BEN

The six of us.

KANG

What about the Lieutenant?

BEN

If you call Ahn the entire South Korean army is going to descend on this point.

CHOI

That's exactly what I want.

BEN

If the army moves in it's going to be the beginning of World War 3 and nobody is going to be able to stop it. Do you want that on your hands? If we keep this small, and we keep it silent, we might be able to avoid all of that.

CHOI

And if not?



BEN  
We'll all be dead and it won't  
matter anymore.

JEONG  
What are you doing?

BEN  
Getting ready.

CUT TO:

EXT. CONCRETE BUNKER - NIGHT

Ben walks out of the bunker and around the corner to the base of a tree. He clears away a pile of leaves revealing two North Korean-issued rifles.

CUT TO:

INT. CONCRETE BUNKER - NIGHT

Ben reenters the barrack and presents the rifles to the rest of the group.

BEN  
There. Now everybody has a gun.

CHOI  
This is fucked. I can't believe  
you're thinking about doing this.

BEN  
I am doing this. And all of you are  
coming, too.

CHOI  
There is no way.

BEN  
We leave at dusk. Get some sleep.

Nobody moves as Ben walks toward the bunks.

CUT TO:

INT. CONCRETE BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Ben climbs into his bed. He tosses and turns. He can't sleep. He climbs out of bed.

CUT TO:

EXT. OPEN PRAIRIE - NIGHT

Ben walks toward Paik's grave.

As he gets closer, he notices two shovels sticking up from the ground.

He runs to the grave.

It's just a hole in the ground. Dirt is piled around the hole.

There are marks in the dirt where Paik's body was dragged out of the grave. The makeshift headstone rests abandoned to the side.

Ben stares in horror, then turns and runs.

CUT TO:

INT. CONCRETE BEDROOM - NIGHT

Ben bursts into the bunks where the rest of his soldiers sleep.

BEN  
(shouting)  
Everybody up! Now!

They slowly wake.

JEONG  
What time is it?

BEN  
They know everything. We've gotta go now. They're probably crossing the border as we speak.

CHOI  
What are you talking about?

BEN  
They dug up the body Dak-Ho and I buried. They probably found the tunnel. They probably know we're here.

JEONG  
Calm down, Ben.

BEN  
Fuck calm. Get ready. We leave in fifteen minutes.

KANG

Yes sir.

LEE

Sir.

CHOI

I'm not going.

BEN

This isn't optional.

CHOI

You can shoot me here and now if you want but I'm not getting myself killed to solve your fuck up.

Ben glares long and hard at them.

The phone rings. Ben answers.

BEN

What?! Yes sir, this is Sergeant Bak... yes sir...I'm sorry sir...I'll get that right too you, sir...yes sir...yes sir.

He hangs up the phone.

BEN (CONT'D)

Shit. That was the lieutenant. We forgot to file a patrol report last night. Goddammit!

JEONG

So send it to him now.

BEN

No, that's not it. He's coming in the morning. If Dak-Ho's not back by then... If he's not back then we'll all fucked. We're all complicit, every one of us. And not only are we going to be tried and probably convicted on any number of charges, but we're still going to go to war. Seoul is going to send men and guns and tanks and they'll get Dak-Ho back, but they won't stop there. Is that what you want? Most of you, you're like me: months away from getting out. And so the choice is yours.

(MORE)

BEN (CONT'D)

Come with me, perform a small, covert mission to rescue Dak-Ho and be back in time for breakfast tomorrow. Or you can wait here for Ahn to show up and wake up the entire world with reports of our missiles launching into the North.

CHOI

Getting Dak-Ho back isn't going to stop the North. This is just going to get bigger, it's not going to stop.

BEN

What do you want me to say? He's my friend, your compatriot. What choice do we have?

Choi thinks about. He nods his assent.

KWON

It's going to be light in a few hours.

BEN

That's why we don't have time to lose.

Ben and Kwon each grab one of the North Korean rifles. Kwon carries his with his one good hand. The four other soldiers each take a standard issue rifle. They file out of the bunker.

CUT TO:

EXT. CONCRETE BUNKER - CONTINUOUS

Without a word, the group solemnly marches away from their home.

CUT TO:

EXT. OPEN PRAIRIE - NIGHT

They've marched this way hundreds of times before. They know it by heart, could do it with their eyes closed but their movements are stiff, cautious as if they're watching their every step.

CUT TO:

EXT. ROCKY FIELD - NIGHT

They march into the boulder-filled field.

JEONG  
Where are we?

BEN  
Dak-Ho and I discovered this place.

JEONG  
And this is where we're going to  
cross over into northern territory?

BEN  
Yes.

They arrive at the door to the secret incursion tunnel found  
by Ben and Dak-Ho.

CHOI  
It's another tunnel.

BEN  
This is how Kwon and his men  
entered our territory.

KWON  
It's also where Ben killed my  
comrade.

Choi does a double take.

CHOI  
Oh.

BEN  
They might be waiting for us on the  
other side.  
(pointing to Kang & Jeong)  
You two open the hatch.  
(pointing to Choi and  
himself)  
We'll be waiting for them.

Just like he had done with Dak-Ho before, Ben lined up with  
Choi, their rifles trained at the opening of the hatch.

Kang and Jeong worked together to slowly open the door.

Ben and Choi tense up.

Then the door is open and there's nobody waiting for them on  
the other side.

One by one, with Ben bringing up the back they file into the tunnel.

CUT TO:

INT. INCURSION TUNNEL - CONTINUOUS

Leaving the door open behind him, Ben enters the tunnel for the second time. Again it's pitch black and the men turn on their flashlights to guide them.

BEN

What should we expect on the other side?

The rest of the group listens in on the conversation as they continue to walk through the darkness.

KWON

The tunnel opens in large courtyard. At each corner of the courtyard is a different station. Bunks are northwest, the mess is northeast, arms and ammo are southwest and the war room is south east.

BEN

Where do you think they're keeping Dak-Ho?

KWON

There are extra rooms in all the buildings. He could be in any of them.

BEN

Probably not in the arms depot though, right?

KWON

Like I said, he could be anywhere.

Ben nods.

BEN

How many men are there?

KWON

Twenty five or thirty. Most will be asleep in the bunks by now though.

BEN

Any security?

KWON

A three man patrol surveys the courtyard every half hour. There'll be a small unit in each building, probably more wherever they're keeping your friend. All this is, of course, if they haven't changed strategies.

BEN

Okay men, this is what we're going to do. Kwon, Kang, and myself are going to investigate the war room. Choi, Jeong and Lee, you three check out arms. Radio if you find him, otherwise don't leave until I give you further instructions. Use non-lethal force whenever possible. Don't make your presence known unless it's absolutely necessary. Stealth is key. Got it?

Yes sir.	KANG	Yes sir.	JEONG
Yes sir.	LEE	Yes sir.	CHOI
Kwon nods.			

BEN (CONT'D)

Good.

They reach the door at the end of the tunnel. Choi leans in next to Kwon.

CHOI

(quietly)

Why are you helping us?

KWON

Because it's my best chance to leave all of this behind.

That's good enough for Choi.

Ben reaches for the handle on the hatch.

BEN

As soon as we close the hatch, head to your assigned station. We'll meet up with you soon. Good luck.

He silently opens the door.

Through the hatch they can see two buildings, exactly where Kwon said they would be. There's no sign of the patrol or any northern soldiers.

CUT TO:

EXT. NORTH KOREAN OUTPOST - NIGHT

Without sound the six soldiers file out from the tunnel. They're in the middle of enemy territory, the epicenter of everything they've been guarding against.

Kang silently closes the hatch behind him. They stand against the door, keeping in the shadows. Ben glances at Choi. Choi nods.

The groups split and silently begin walking toward their destinations.

Kwon leads Ben and Kang through the shadows toward a squat, one-story building southeast from the tunnel.

There is no sound but the buzz of insects.

Soon they are across from their target, but to get there they must leave the shadows of the tunnel building and cross the open courtyard.

Kwon signals for them to stop.

The sound of boots crunches around the corner.

Kwon signals Ben and Kang to stay put.

He steps forward, out of the shadows, toward the crunches.

THREE SOLDIERS round the corner. They see their comrade and stop in their tracks.

SURPRISED SOLDIER

Kwon?

Ben and Kang jump from the shadows and with the butt of their rifles smack the two rear soldiers in the head. They crumble to the ground.

Before he can react, Kwon knocks the first soldier in the head and he too crumples. Kang, Kwon and Ben each take an unconscious body and pull it to the shadows.



Keeping low, they run across the courtyard to the building entrance. Ben hesitates at the door, but Kwon turns the handle and walks right in. It was unlocked.

CUT TO:

INT. SHABBY OFFICE BUILDING - CONTINUOUS

The three enter the empty hallways of a cinder block building.

They stick their heads into every room. They check every crevice and closet. They hurry around corners when they hear footsteps coming in their direction or see shadows on the wall.

They are exasperated when they don't find Dak-Ho.

They sneak back out of the building and into the night.

CUT TO:

EXT. NORTH KOREAN OUTPOST - NIGHT

Ben walks around to the back of the building, away from the lights and openness of the courtyard. He pulls out a walkie-talkie from his pack.

BEN  
(whispering)  
Jeong? Come in Jeong.

JEONG (O.C.)  
This is Jeong.

BEN  
Any sign of Dak-Ho?

JEONG  
Negative.

BEN  
We're going to check the mess hall next. You three stay put.

JEONG  
Copy.

Ben puts the walkie back into his pack and walks back around the building to where Kang and Kwon wait in the shadows.

Ben shakes his head.

Kwon leads them to the mess hall, staying in the shadows of the trees that surround the compound.

CUT TO:

INT. CAFETERIA - NIGHT

Kang and Ben quietly follow Kwon inside the tiny eating space. Ceramic tile cover the walls; many are missing, most are cracked.

Dak-Ho is nowhere to be found in the dining area so they move back to the kitchen.

Rusting pots and pans and battered silverware cover the counters.

They hear voices coming toward them. Without thinking they duck behind an island in the middle of the kitchen until the three soldier patrol moves on to a different part of the building.

They search a tiny walk-in freezer. Nothing.

They move on to the next door, which looks to lead to a tiny pantry. Ben opens the door.

Lying on the floor, his head resting on a bag of rice, is Dak-Ho. His face is black and blue, his arms covered in cuts and welts and bruises.

Ben waves the two others into the tiny pantry. They squeeze in and close the door behind them.

Gently, Ben leans down and puts his rifle on the ground. He rests his hand on Dak-Ho's shoulder who wakes up with a jolt and lets out a cry.

Then Dak-Ho realizes who is leaning down next to him.

DAK-HO

(yelling)

Ben! What are you doing here?

BEN

Shh. The guards will hear you. We came to get you. Can you walk?

Dak-Ho shakily tries to stand. Ben gets his first good look at him--he's missing a few teeth and is bleeding from his fingers where his fingernails used to be.

Dak-Ho checks out his other rescuers. His eyes stop on Kwon.

BEN (CONT'D)  
Let's get out of here.

DAK-HO  
Wait.  
(motioning at Kwon)  
What is he doing here?

BEN  
He's with us, he helped us find  
you.

DAK-HO  
No. No no no.

BEN  
C'mon, we don't have much time.

DAK-HO  
He's one of them!

BEN  
Look--

DAK-HO  
It was him. He did this to me!

BEN  
They'll hear you.

DAK-HO  
He tortured my father, he's caused  
my family so much pain.

BEN  
Dak-Ho, this is Kwon. From the  
tunnel. You met him.

DAK-HO  
He's from the North.

BEN  
He's been helping us.

DAK-HO  
Him and his people have ruined me.

BEN  
No--

DAK-HO  
They've dishonored me and my  
family.

BEN  
Dak-Ho, please--

DAK-HO  
I can never forgive him.

KWON  
That wasn't me!

BEN  
Stop--

DAK-HO  
I need to do this.

Dak-Ho kneels down to the floor to grab Ben's rifle. He aims it at Kwon's chest.

BEN  
NO!

Ben tries to wrestle the gun from him.

Kang dives to the floor.

Dak-Ho pulls the trigger.

Kwon staggers back and grabs his chest. His legs melt beneath him and he tumbles to the floor.

The door bursts open. Three guards try and push their way in. Without hesitation Dak-Ho shoots each one in quick succession.

Ben leans down to check on Kwon.

A siren begins to wail off in the distance.

DAK-HO  
The entire camp will be coming for us now. Follow me.

He hobbles out from the pantry and into the kitchen. Kang looks from Ben, knelt beside Kwon, to Dak-Ho, limping toward the oncoming fire fight. He gets off the ground, steps over the bodies on the floor and runs after Dak-Ho.

Kwon's breathing is ragged, his eyes can't focus. Blood is running through his fingers pressed to his chest.

BEN  
Kwon...

He doesn't respond. The stain grows on the floor around. His breathing stops. His jaw goes slack.

BEN (CONT'D)  
I'm so sorry.

He continues to kneel by Kwon's body even as gunfire erupts outside. He doesn't move.

Then, as if out of a trance, he gets off the floor. He grabs a rifle from one of the fallen soldiers. He takes one last look at Kwon, then runs out of the pantry, through the kitchen, into the cafeteria, and finally outside into combat.

CUT TO:

EXT. NORTH KOREAN OUTPOST - CONTINUOUS

The sun is beginning to rise.

The battle rages around Ben. Bullets fly through the air. North Korean soldiers seem to be everywhere.

His eyes dart around. He sees Choi around a corner, taking shots whenever he can. Jeong fires from behind a dumpster.

There are screams from everywhere. Bodies fall to the ground in red clouds.

Ben runs to the edge of the woods, succeeding in getting behind everybody.

He hurries along the trees toward the now-deserted bunks. All the soldiers are too busy to notice him.

He reaches the door to the bunks and steps inside.

CUT TO:

INT. NORTH KOREAN BARRACKS - CONTINUOUS

With nobody to stop him, Ben runs to the lockers along the far wall. There are no locks on them. He searches for a locker labelled "Kwon."

When he finds it, he grabs the backpack stored inside, tossing his own pack to the ground in the process. He tosses the bag over his shoulder and sprints out of the barracks.

CUT TO:

## EXT. NORTH KOREAN OUTPOST - CONTINUOUS

The fire fight continues. More bodies have fallen. Ben watches for a moment. He sees Dak-Ho crouched behind a target used for firing practice. He watches him jump out from behind when the moment is right and begin to fire. Dak-Ho falls to the ground, shot by a soldier he didn't see.

Ben grabs his radio.

BEN

Choi! Choi! Get the men! Return to the tunnel!

Ben crouches behind the barracks. He sees Choi frantically motioning to the remaining men.

Ben steadies his rifle and begins to fire on the North Koreans from behind. They begin to fall, baffled at the origin of the gunfire.

Choi, Lee, Kang and Jeong emerge from around the corners of the tunnel and make for the door. Choi and Jeong provide cover fire as Kang and Lee wrench the door open.

Ben continues firing at the North Koreans, but they've figured out where he's hiding. Now bullets fly at him.

His four fellow soldiers disappear into the tunnel. Some Northern soldiers rush in after them. The rest come for Ben.

He takes a few final shots, then tosses the gun to the ground and begins to run North into the woods, unable to break their ranks and head for the tunnel.

Bullets fly past him as he runs away from the gunfire. Suddenly a bullet rips through his arm with a fleeting cloud of red. He cries out and grabs his arm and continues to run.

CUT TO:

## EXT. NORTH KOREAN FOREST - DAWN

Ben runs without stopping through the woods. As he runs further the sound of gunfire fades into the distance.

After running for what seems like forever, when the gunfire has long since disappeared, he stops and sits down against a tree.

He opens Kwon's backpack and pulls out a People's Army uniform. He sets the uniform on the ground.

He takes off his jacket and observes his wound. It's bleeding profusely, but the bullet just grazed his arm, leaving a gash.

He roots deeper into the backpack and pulls out a wallet. He looks over Kwon's ID, sees that there is a little bit of cash. He pulls out Kwon's train ticket to Moscow.

He strips off his uniform covered in his blood and Kwon's blood and pulls on the North Korean camo. He stuffs Kwon's belongings back into the bag and begins to walk, favoring his arm.

CUT TO:

EXT. TINY VILLAGE - DAY

Ben arrives in a small village. A mural of Kim Jong-Il is painted on a crumbling wall on the outskirts.

A decrepit, rusting bus idles outside of a deteriorating building. A line of people wait to get on.

Ben joins the end of the line and observes the people in front of him.

Like the people before him, he hands the driver a couple of Kwon's bills as he climbs onto the bus.

CUT TO:

INT. AUTOBUS - DAY

Ben stares out the bus window as the North Korean countryside rolls past. He looks down and writes in his journal.

CUT TO:

EXT. FISHING VILLAGE - DAY

Ben climbs off the bus at a tiny village sitting by a lake. He crinkles his nose at a bad smell.

He pulls Kwon's ID from the pack and studies the address. He wanders through the town, past the tiny shacks and decaying buildings. Malnourished kids play in the streets as their broken-down parents watch through their windows.

Ben stops in front of a certain shack, even smaller and more rundown than the rest. He knocks on the door.

A woman with white hair and a deeply lined face answers the door. A teenage girl looks out through the window.

BEN

Mrs. Kwon? My name is Benjamin Bak.  
I'm afraid I have some bad news  
about your son.

Mrs. Kwon begins to weep. She pulls Ben inside the hut with her and closes the door.

CUT TO:

INT. KWON SHACK - VARIOUS

SERIES OF SHOTS:

- A) Mrs. Kwon bandages Ben's arm
- B) Ben is lying on a blanket on the floor when Kwon's sister brings him a glass of water to drink. Ben thanks her.
- C) The three eat dinner together around a tiny table.
- D) Ben waving goodbye to the family as he leaves the shack.

CUT TO:

EXT. PYONGYANG STREET - DAY

Ben descends down the steps of a different, equally decrepit bus. The destination in the window of the bus reads "Pyongyang."

The streets are devoid of cars except for government issued sedans. There are pedestrians everywhere. A citywide speaker system spits out propaganda to anybody who will listen.

PROPAGANDA SPEAKER (O.S.)

The People's Army, lead and blessed  
by our Great Leader Kim Jong-Il,  
broke through the Demilitarized  
Zone earlier today.

Ben crosses the street from the bus, walking toward the train station.

PROPAGANDA SPEAKER (CONT'D)

Sustaining no casualties, the  
People's Army attacked the South's  
bases along the DMZ, destroying all  
the fortifications in their way.

CUT TO:



INT. TRAIN STATION - CONTINUOUS

Ben walks through the crumbling train station. He pulls a ticket from his bag.

PROPAGANDA SPEAKER (O.S.)

This offensive is in response to the South's unprovoked attacks on North Korean soil, accomplished using a series of tunnels they have dug over the past three decades.

Ben hands his ticket to an attendant, who points him in the direction of his platform.

PROPAGANDA SPEAKER (CONT'D)

The People's Army is currently advancing toward Seoul. Upon its occupation, our Supreme Commander will work with the South to achieve a peaceful Korean reunification. Long live Kim Jong-Il, our Great Leader.

Ben turns onto a platform marked by a notice board reading "MOSCOW."

Without looking back he climbs on the train.

CUT TO:

INT. TRAIN - DAY

Ben finds his way to an empty compartment. He sits down and opens his backpack. He pulls out his notebook and flips to a page near the end.

He begins to write.

ANGLE ON: NOTEBOOK

Final line at the bottom of a page full of writing:  
"For now, I just want to forget."

He closes the notebook and pulls a large, manila envelope from his bag. The upper corner is filled with stamps. It is addressed to "Mom, Dad & Polly."

He slides the journal into the envelope.

The train lurches forward.

CUT TO:

EXT. NORTH KOREAN COUNTRYSIDE - SUNSET

An ancient train rattles down the tracks, lurching westward into the last rays of daylight.

THE END