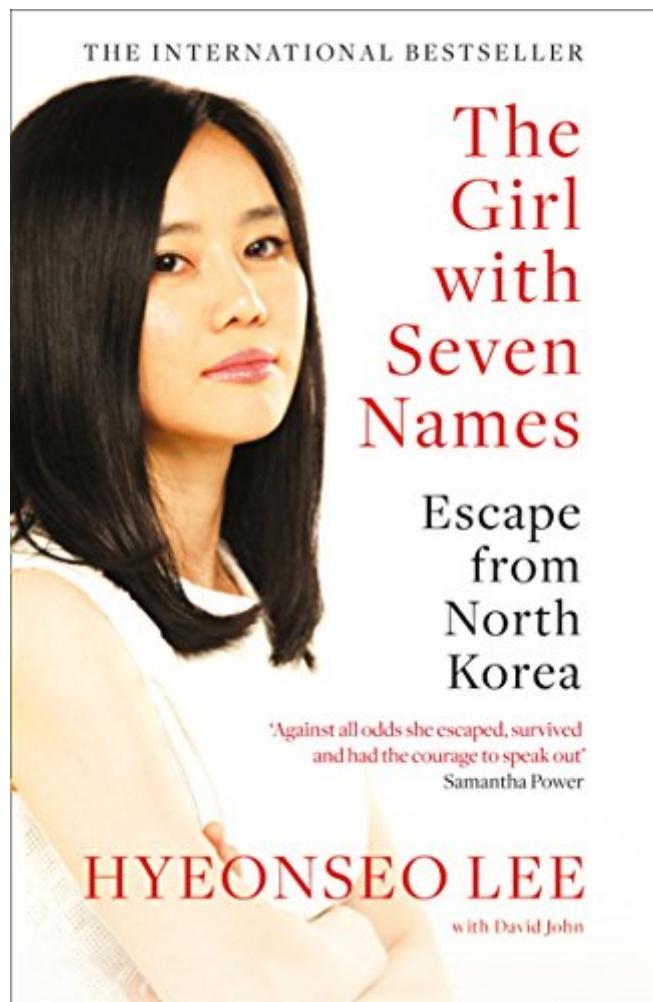


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The Girl With Seven Names: A North Korean Defector's Story



Synopsis

NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLER An extraordinary insight into life under one of the world's most ruthless and secretive dictatorships – and the story of one woman's terrifying struggle to avoid capture/repatriation and guide her family to freedom. As a child growing up in North Korea, Hyeonseo Lee was one of millions trapped by a secretive and brutal communist regime. Her home on the border with China gave her some exposure to the world beyond the confines of the Hermit Kingdom and, as the famine of the 1990s struck, she began to wonder, question and to realise that she had been brainwashed her entire life. Given the repression, poverty and starvation she witnessed surely her country could not be, as she had been told – the best on the planet? Aged seventeen, she decided to escape North Korea. She could not have imagined that it would be twelve years before she was reunited with her family. She could not return, since rumours of her escape were spreading, and she and her family could incur the punishments of the government authorities – involving imprisonment, torture, and possible public execution. Hyeonseo instead remained in China and rapidly learned Chinese in an effort to adapt and survive. Twelve years and two lifetimes later, she would return to the North Korean border in a daring mission to spirit her mother and brother to South Korea, on one of the most arduous, costly and dangerous journeys imaginable. This is the unique story not only of Hyeonseo's escape from the darkness into the light, but also of her coming of age, education and the resolve she found to rebuild her life – not once, but twice – first in China, then in South Korea. Strong, brave and eloquent, this memoir is a triumph of her remarkable spirit.

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Customer Reviews

I've read several accounts of escaping from North Korea. This is a good one because it covers several subjects that are not covered in other books. For example, Hyeonseo grew up right on the border next to the Yalu River. There is extensive discussion of cross border smuggling in the book as her mother and other relatives were participants in this trade. Being so close to the border, they could also get Chinese cell phone service and calls could be made to North Korea using Chinese cells. The other thing that is quite different about her story is that she spent more than a decade in China and was continually hiding from being discovered as an illegal immigrant. In one period, she mentioned to others that she was from North Korea and it's clear somebody reported her. She withstood an interrogation by the Chinese police and was able to convince them she was Chinese due to her ability to speak Mandarin and her mastery of Chinese characters, which she attributes to her father pushing her to study while she was in school. She has dangerous interactions with gangs, which she survives, was assaulted badly by an unknown assailant with a 1 liter beer bottle, an incident that did put her in the hospital and other adventures. One learns a bit about China and North Korea in this book. She has relatives which span several classes of North Korean society and one can get a feeling for what those strata are like. She also talks about the great amount of indoctrination she received during her education, of course this is common among the accounts of DPRK defectors. Different than most of the defectors' books, she does describe the challenges facing defectors in South Korea. Their education is worthless and hence most of them severely struggle to obtain a college degree, which is important in South Korea.

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