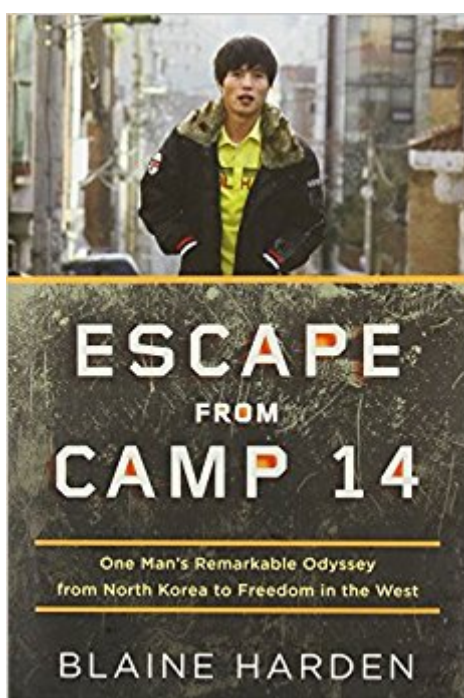


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# By Blaine Harden **Escape From Camp 14: One Man's Remarkable Odyssey From North Korea To Freedom In The West**



## Synopsis

The shocking story of one of the few people born in a North Korean political prison to have escaped and survived. North Korea is isolated and hungry, bankrupt and belligerent. It is also armed with nuclear weapons. Between 150,000 and 200,000 people are being held in its political prison camps, which have existed twice as long as Stalin's Soviet gulags and twelve times as long as the Nazi concentration camps. Very few born and raised in these camps have escaped. But Shin Donghyuk did. In *Escape from Camp 14*, acclaimed journalist Blaine Harden tells the story of Shin Dong-hyuk and through the lens of Shin's life unlocks the secrets of the world's most repressive totalitarian state. Shin knew nothing of civilized existence-he saw his mother as a competitor for food, guards raised him to be a snitch, and he witnessed the execution of his own family. Through Harden's harrowing narrative of Shin's life and remarkable escape, he offers an unequalled inside account of one of the world's darkest nations and a riveting tale of endurance, courage, and survival.

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## Customer Reviews

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harrowing narrative of Shin's life and remarkable escape, he offers an unequaled inside account of one of the world's darkest nations and a riveting tale of endurance, courage, and survival.

In *Escape from Camp 14*, Blaine Harden best seller masterfully allows us to know Shin, not as a hero but as a man, by telling us a story what was done to him by the repressive government of North Korea and what he was forced to do to survive. Shin was born in Camp 14, the son to two political prisoners, and was condemned from birth to a life of hunger and misery in forced labor. Prisoners in the camp were not taught to value things like friendship and family. Shin's higher power in the camp were food, the guards and the government teachers, from many of whom he suffered sadistic beatings and torture. He was taught to inform on family and friends- and to feel indifference and no remorse for doing so. This was evident when one of his teachers beat to death a six year old classmate. When Shin was 13 years old, he told the night guard of his school with another boy of the escape plan by his mother and brother, as informing was something he was taught to do from an early age, and he hoped to be rewarded. However, the school night guard took full credit for discovering the plan, and rather than being rewarded, Shin was arrested and guards tortured him for four days to extract more information, believing him to be part of the plan to escape. After approximately seven months spent in a tiny concrete prison cell, Shin and his father were forced to watch the public executions of Shin's mother and brother. At age 23, Shin decides to escape with fellow prisoner Park. Park attempted to go through thru an electric fence first, but was fatally electrocuted. Shin managed to escape using Park's body as a shield to ground the current, but still suffered severe burns and permanent scars when his legs slipped onto the lowermost wire as he crawled over Park's body. After escaping, Shin broke into a nearby farmer's barn and found an old military uniform. Wearing the uniform, he was able to pass for a North Korean soldier. He survived by scrounging and stealing food. Eventually, he reached the northern border with China and bribed destitute North Korean border guards with food and cigarettes. After spending some time working as a laborer in different parts of China, Shin was accidentally found by a journalist in a restaurant, who brought him to the South Korean embassy for asylum. Living in the US today, Shin does work as a human rights advocate.

This is my first book review. I am a voracious reader. However, I did not write a book review until I listened to the audio book. One of the reasons that I did not write a book review was because I was not a native English speaker. Writing in English was not easy to me. However, after listening to the book, I felt like I had to write anything, at least saying thanks to the author and Shin, the protagonist,

who had to endure unimaginable horror and is brave enough to share his story with the world. Before I listened to the audio book, I had a vague idea of North Korea. For example, NKorean dictator, Kim Jung Il is less human, mentally ill and very dangerous. He exploited NKoreans and let them starve to death. As the author mentioned in the book, I was one of many SKoreans who were simply ignorant and indifferent to Nkorea. I felt sorry for them but that was it. Their story was one of the typical stories of poor communist countries. Their miserable and horrible story did not affect me on personal level until I encountered the book. It was a shocking and eye opening experience to me. Its horrifying story scared me to death. I had to pause many times listening to the book because I could not stop crying, or simply bear his horrible experience any more. After reading the book, I referred it to my family and friends hoping that more SKoreans be aware of the serious problems of NKoreans. I pray for NKoreans whose rights have been completely violated by their greedy, stupid, and less human dictators, Kim's family. I still do not know what exactly I can do to help NKoreans but I will make my efforts to let more SKoreans know the dire reality of NKoreans. I will continue to have interest in unification of two Koreas and support LiNK (Liberty in North Korean). Again, I sincerely thank to Shin whose courage is indescribable, unimaginable, and inspirational. Thanks to him, I realize that my complaints on life is just luxurious excuses. I envy his inner strength. I pray for his inner peace and freedom. I am also grateful to the author who made Shin's story available to the world in such a powerful way.

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