

Fast, Stephanie. *She Is Mine: A War Orphan's Incredible Journey of Survival*. Aloha, OR: D & S Publishing. 2014. 224 pages. \$19.99. ISBN: 9780985413422.

One Sunday morning as I was greeting congregants before worship, a Korean War veteran (a former pilot) and his wife walked up to me and handed me a book. He said, "We would like you to read this book." The title was *She Is Mine*. The wife explained to me how her Korean adoptee was related to the author of the book. I said, "I will read it and return it to you." He said, "You wouldn't imagine what a four-year-old went through." Then, the subtitle caught my eyes: *A War Orphan's Incredible Journey of Survival*. On the following Sunday, he asked, "Did you read the book?" I said, "Not yet. I will when I can. I promise." Yet, I wondered when I would have the time.

But, when I began reading the book, I couldn't put it down. I would have read the book from cover to cover in one sitting if I had no other duties. I was so drawn to the story that I felt like I was walking beside the railroad and wandering around villages with Yoon Myoung (*destiny* in Korean), the protagonist. I knew that survival was a challenge in the war-torn South Korea of the 1950s. I also learned years ago that Compassion International had been founded in order to respond to the humanitarian crisis there, especially by taking care of orphans after the Korean War. However, I knew and heard nothing about the orphans' stories—how much they had to suffer to survive each day. This book gave life to history in a way that I will never forget.

A mixed-race child abandoned at the age of four, Yoon Myoung makes her journey back home by following the railroad. Yet, her odyssey leads her into unexpected and painful twists and turns. She satisfies her hunger by eating grasshoppers, mice, and leftover food for pigs, as well as fruits in the fields and in the mountains. When she was caught stealing food, however, she had to pay the price—in pain. Her suffering was so great throughout the story that when she was raped, I reasoned, "It is not too bad because she is at least not dying." When she was finally rescued by a Swedish nurse, I cried.

This book is a story of Yoon Myoung's journey home. Everyone in the story longs to go back to or find home—whether it is an American soldier, Yoon Myoung's mother, or wandering orphans. That journey is often interrupted by malevolence or a lack of benevolence. But, Yoon Myoung's story constantly reminds its readers that it is always the goodness of humanity that saves her from dying—the man who untied her from a waterwheel, an old lady who pulled her out of a well, and a young mother who fed her during a cold Korean winter, to name a few. Whenever I felt discouraged by human brutality—though I was not surprised, knowing how evil we can be—I was comforted by a glimpse of the divine dwelling in each of us.

I recommend this book, first to a general audience and especially those who are interested in adoption. Each orphan's experiences may differ, but they all experienced the same thing—abandonment. The book will help readers better understand what these children had to suffer as orphans. Second, I encourage those who have lost direction and are searching for meaning in life to read this book. After enduring intolerable and indiscernible pain, the author states: "I believe that our lives are meant to be a gift, not a burden" (p. 219). This book is not a theological treatise, but it is a testimony of faith. I hope we all find inspiration from her story. Lastly, I urge immigrants who long to find a home in a foreign country to pick up this book. In its pages, readers will find new meanings of family, faith, and belonging.

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