**North Korea, 2007**

Some people dislike darkness. It may give you the feeling that each step is going to make you fall down, but you end up growing bolder whenever the step you made was right.

As the autumn progressed, the wind blew stronger and stronger in the woods and the sun that used to enlighten the environment until the late night, set earlier and earlier, leaving the cold soil of the trail without warmth.

Jiyoon stepped on the grass.

At a slow pace, she took the beaten path that lead towards the school passing through the undergrouth, as it was shorter and faster to travel in.

She walked without a noise.

Her head was filled with too many thoughts, too many concerns to worry about that she forgot to check the clock as she lay in the grass. It was so late that she would have skipped the dinner.

Jiyoon was getting used to this kind of life.

Every free evening she felt the need to get away from the hustle and bustle of the military life.

Whenever she looked at the mirror, she could clearly see how stronger her muscles grew, but there was something in her brain that made her weak.

All those girls who asked her out, who giggled whenever she passed in front of them through the alley and who chatted about how sexy and strong she was, didn't know what her main weakness was.

Nobody knew that ter main weakness happened to take the shape of a sandy-haired girl called Heo Gayoon.

Whoever was smart enough to watch their moves was completely aware about Gayoon's crush for Jiyoon, but who cared? Every girl, soldier, student or both considered her really hot.

What they didn't know was Jiyoon's feelings towards her.

At one point, Jiyoon thoughts she could trust that strange girl. She seemed to be strong enough to get beaten just the save her, who she didn't even know back then.

Sometimes blood tastes better than silence...

Those words fulfilled the requirements for a brave enough soldier.

But there was a dark side of that soldier. Behind the mask, lay a girl who wept silently for nights.

A girl who took analgesics to anesthize the memories, relieve the pain and... Who had feelings for her.

Since their accident together at the cemetery, they started being awkward around each other.

Jiyoon knew it was hard for her to stand the rejection, but she couldn't help about it. There was something special between them, but maybe they were just meant to be friends, and all would have gone in the right way.

Eventually she would forgive her and be forgiven in turn.

But how could Gayoon be just her friend if she kept sleeping around with the students and rejected her only?

Out of the blue, she heard a scream.

All the thoughts just slipped away when she heard than loud whine come from the thicket. Without losing more time, she threw herself headlong in the middle of the vegetation to find the person who cried.

It wasn't very simple, as the plants hindered the view, but the sound was clear enough to predict the provenance.

It was nearing and she could hear it.

Jiyoon took a knife out of the bag and started shredding the thick vines that prevented her from go beyond the tree. Eventually, she managed to make a hole large enough to make her pass.

On the ground lay a black eyed girl, who whined and murmured fathomless words. Her skin looked very pale.

Jiyoon knew who the lyring girl was, having seen her before. She was the younger one of those who was present her first day at the school, when Gayoon fought with Hyejin.

Her name was Minji. She was the one who told Hyejin to stop, who saved Gayoon...

"I tried to stop the bleeding but we need to take her to the school..." - A voice behind surprised her.

Jiyoon turned the head to see who spoke.

Gayoon gave her a fant smile, trying to ward off the awkwardness.

"Why didn't you carry her by yourself?" - Jiyoon shouted, staring at her.

The sandy-haired girl lowered the gaze, ashamed. Having promised she wouldn't judge her for the analgesics, Jiyoon the comments for herself and carried the girl on her shoulders, instead.

The school was not that far, and the bandage made by Gayoon was tight enough to stop the blood for a few minutes more.

Exiting the thicket, they saw the buidlings loom from afar. Luckily, the infirmary was located in the outer part rather than in the school, so they could reach it quickly.

"What happened to her?" - A doctor exclaimed when they arrived.

Gayoon spoke first - "We were training in the wood, when she fainted... I don't know what happened, but a small wound started off an emorrhage."

Jiyoon stood there, silent.

The sandy-haired girl seemed truly shocked by the sight of the large amount of blood gushed by Minji's body. The dark-haired girl noticed that Gayoon's hands were still covered with blood, so she took her beside.

Grabbing a piece of cloth, she started cleaning her hands gently. - "Ehi, calm down... it's all over" - She said, hugging her.

"Let's have a talk, shall we?" - Jiyoon continued, leaning the gloved hand onto the other girl's shoulder - "...once upon a time, a girl told me that blood tastes better than silence..." - She said.

Gayoon let out a small giggle. - "It's just... it's just that I don't like blood either..." - She whispered. - "I am a coward, I know..."

"Don't even think about it... you are the one who got beaten because she wanted to save me from the harassment of an older girl, when I was new. Do you even know what does it mean?"

"Then why did you reject me? I love you..."

Her eyes were sad, and a tear already wetted her cheeks. Jiyoon just hugged her softly. - "I don't want misunderstandings between us... it's better to be just friends..."