**North Korea, 2007**

The dense vegetation leaves you no space when you're running at breakneck speed through the forests in the pouring rain.

If you just chose to run a few millimeters too far right or too far left you would be dead, just a forgotten soul whose body lies down the cold soil covered with you blood and with jungle leaves.

Another few moments later, the enemy would have deleted your body forever.

By enemy, I don't mean the other army.

Those men and women with their lame weapons and their flabby unprepared bodies can't help but die like little ants when the destructive force of the firearms passes through their heads.

No. The real enemy is the jungle.

Jessica sensoriality was muffled by the cries coming from each direction as she ran faster and faster on the way to the freedom. Blasts and firings was heard but seemed so unreal and far away.

She fought against the rainforest rather than attacking the people.

The rain kept falling hard on the ground and the vegetation kept interfering with her outrush from the living hell. She knew to be run after but the humans were not notching her mind right then.

There was more.

A wound divided her chest in two halves and her tied back hair was stained with blood as a sign that even her head was injured. Running was her main priority now; her pace established the thin line electing life or death.

To run. To save. To heal.

Meters and even kilometers separated her from the camp and the battle continued behind her, fierce and destructive. Her only possibility was to divert and seek for a place to hide.

A place where the fighters wouldn't come for sure.

She was tired, exhausted and the strength lessened as she rushed in the surrounding jungle.

Suddenly, the trees started lessening their density and a clearing eventually appeared in front or her. A river flowed in a small waterfall that led to an almost invisible inlet in the middle.

Her last chance to live.

She gingerly approached the nearest point where the rocks allowed the descent and the dangerous water slid not too fast.

The cave was small and narrow, but she managed to slip into the hole even if the bleeding arm didn't consent a proper cling to the protruding corners.

That effort had worn her out, but she was finally hidden in the dark room, where the incoming battle army wouldn't hurt her. She finally was safe, protected by the solid walls of the cavern.

Her vision was fuzzy, and her brain was slowly stopping to work properly.

The wound made her lose a lot of blood, and as the hemorrhage went ahead her senses started blurring. The pain was almost unbearable and she would surely cry if the shouts weren’t going to attract fighters.

It was hard to accept, though.

Dying alone in a cave was not her plan.

If only the girl had rejected the American army's offer to go to North Korea she would have been lying in a beach under the sun, tanning. Joining the war for money wasn't the right choice.

Her mother was right.

She would have died young.

Without a story.

Without any friend holding her hand.

Without the love of an other half.

All these thoughts hit her at the same time, breaking her still beating heart. She wept, thinking about the friend and the relatives she was abandoning forever, all the hopes she was not going to have anymore.

Out of the blue, a hand touched her bare shoulder.

Jessica didn't realize immediately what was going on, but winced as soon as the stranger's eyes glimmered inside of hers. She tried to rebel but her limbs were weak and couldn't even more.

"I won't hurt you..." - She heard the stranger whisper.

It was a feminine voice. Jessica spoke enough of that foreign language to perceive whether the speaker is dangerous or not, and that child's voice didn't seem the one of a killer.

She turned the head to face the other girl.

"What's your name?" - She faintly asked.

She observed the girl, who was a little bit younger than her. The very black hair framed her thin face and the dark skin signaled that she was indigenous.

Although that warm skinny body of her imparted a reassuring feeling, she had to be cautious. Sometimes kids can be as tricky as their elders, and she was surely not in the condition to fight.

"My name is Yuri" - She was replied by the sweet voice.

Jessica felt the wound soothe, as the girl rubbed there a creamy substance. The gesture slightly confused her, but she couldn't help but let her continue her work without saying a word.

Yuri put a silky sheet of tissue on the shoulder, tightening it to stop the flowing of the blood.

Little by little, the hemorrhage ceased, and she could breathe a sigh of relief.

"Why'd you help me?" - She asked.

Their gazes met and for a few seconds, nobody spoke. She just stared at those black eyes whose owner sat beside her without replying. Maybe she didn't want to, maybe she didn't understand...

The girl finally turned the head towards her.

"I help you because I don't want you to die..." - She said - "...many people die in this war and I've seen enough bodies falling on the jungle leaves so far.”

That sad look aroused greater compassion that she had ever felt in her short yet busy life.

Those facial features consumed by the privations of the war told her a story too often ignored by every chronicle: the civilians who fled the cities struck by the total war.

She had never felt that ashamed to be a soldier before.

"How long have you been living here?"

That question was as heavy as a boulder on the younger girl's heart.

"I've lived here for months. The battle never touches this part of the jungle, but now things are changing... I saw the strangers preparing the Machines of Fire and nearing this zone..."

Jessica's heartbeat fastened.

She realized how merciless and cruel her work was. She herself had contributed by setting up those tanks that pushed forward that area and she was therefore as responsible as the others for the bloodbaths that were happening all around.

The guilt ripped her soul from the inside.

"You didn't tell me yours. Your name, I mean..."

She snapped back from her daytime nightmares, hearing the sound of the girl's voice.

"You can call me Jessica" - She smiled.

"Jeshika..."

The way she pronounced her name made her let out a soft giggle. The only Koreans she talked with were english-speaking South Koreans and she definitively wasn't used to talk with monolingual northerns.

It sounded cute, though.

"You have a very big wound in your chest..." - The little girl took up the subject. - "I am a little worried for an infection to grow there. Can I have a look? I won't hurt Jeshika..."

Jessica nodded.

She felt a little bit uncomfortable when the little girl had started denuding her. Even if the army taught her how to deal with hits of every kind, she was still unsecure when having physical contact with strangers.

Especially when they touch with their hands her nude breasts.

The blond girl leaned her chest on Yuri's lap. She let her do whatever the weird girl needed to; After all, she was growing an unusual trust for an indigenous person, and she knew the other one wouldn't hurt her.

Slowly, she fell asleep.

T.B.C.