

MARY LOUISE KELLY, HOST:

The South Korean movie "_____" is an international sensation, and that is partly for its universal themes like _____. _____. One example, says NPR's Neda Ulaby, has to do with _____.

NEDA ULABY, BYLINE: "Parasite's" action puddles between a gleaming modernist mansion floating in the hills of Seoul and a squalid _____ where _____.

(SOUNDBITE OF FILM, "PARASITE")

UNIDENTIFIED ACTOR: (As character, speaking in Korean).

ULABY: The mansion could be in Berlin, Dubai, LA, _____. The basement apartment is Seoul 100%, says Gina Kim, who grew up in South Korea.

GINA KIM: Yeah, the basement unit (laughter).

ULABY: Kim works as _____ UCLA. These basement apartments, she says, date from the days of _____ between the U.S. and the Soviet Union _____.

KIM: And they started to build bunkers in all the buildings, even in big apartment buildings.

ULABY: There's _____ in the movie. But renting out these semi-basement bunkers was _____, she says. They were _____ mold and pests and prone to _____. But South Korea, in just decades, _____. Kim says the government had to _____ these semi-underground apartments _____ pouring in, but that did not mean _____.

KIM: People can look into them. People pee on the windows. People park their cars, _____.

BOON JONG-HO: (Speaking in Korean).

ULABY: "Parasite" director Boon Jong-ho says the family in the basement wants to rise, but they're mired in the muck, literally and figuratively.

BOON: (Through interpreter) These semi-basement homes are only _____. That's very similar to the psychology of our protagonist. _____, and people _____, they feel lost. And they feel a _____. And the economy is not just about numbers. _____.

ULABY: Anxiety _____ is part of its _____. This 2008 indie rock hit, "Cheap Coffee," _____.

(SOUNDBITE OF SONG, "CHEAP COFFEE")

CHANG KIHA: (Singing in Korean).

KIM: This kind of goes like, I drink a cup of cheap coffee. _____, but _____.

ULABY: The metaphors here, says Gina Kim, are not especially subtle. But then again, _____.

Neda Ulaby, NPR News.

