

Found in The Forgotten War  
Rebekah James

Trigger Warning: This piece covers subjects of war from the POV of a Korean war nurse with a on-site medical team, so there will be descriptions of wounds and the remains of a battle.

Ruth Barnham plops another roll of bandages into her knapsack. The navy green bag<sup>1</sup> given to her when she first joined back in 1950, after the “doctor draft”<sup>16</sup> had reached Chicago, has faded into a drearier imitation of its former shade.

“Ruth, J’ai need un favor.” She looks up, as her fellow nurse, Elise Bandemer<sup>17</sup>, comes into view. Her hair bounces with each small movement she makes, the honey spun curls folding under her equally faded hat. Absentmindedly, Ruth’s hands reach back, re-adjusting the tight bun formed from the folds of her own light amber hair.

“A favor?” Elise nods, stretching and flexing her fingers from prior labor. The gesture is quick, but Ruth finds the calluses that embroider her fingers to be similar to her own.

“Je suis...busy.” Her hands spread out, gesturing to the newest cot occupant. A Korean ally clutching his shoulder lies atop the cot’s rough lining. Without the packs<sup>2</sup> from the uniform, the dull red is free to breathe and spread to his hand. Elise pushes a sterilized bandage onto the wound, the man’s teeth gritting in response. While checking with the other patients, consoling the restless and replacing stained bandages, Elise had taken Ruth’s place in receiving the drop-off of more injured and supplies. Despite her objections, Elise wouldn’t listen and marched off to wherever she was needed. The word “incapable” couldn’t be associated with Elise. If anything, she covered more than was necessary for a low rank nurse. Her forearms had grown under the weight of stretchers and supplies. Her back hasn’t yet arched like the surgeons’, rather, it remains straight like the steel bars she carries. The rest of her body has stiffened to keep up with the rigorous work she holds herself to.

Ruth has much the same build, but her spine lurches forward. Her shoulders tense with each hour and ache on the later night shifts. Elise once found her rubbing one particularly sore spot between her neck and shoulder in an attempt of massaging it. Without a word, she settled behind her and rotated deft fingers over the knots, soothing them out. Though the relief she received was extraordinary, Ruth never again sought out Elise’s skillful help. Instead, she would massage the areas herself when she found an empty corner of the medical tent. It wasn’t the rough calluses or the breach of personal space. It was her movements, sluggish and fleeting. Motions Ruth was well acquainted with. The thought of putting more pressure on Elise’s weary hands left a bitter taste in her mouth.

*Has Elise ever asked for help before?*

Take the opportunity when it comes. Something of a mantra Ruth had picked up during her time in the mobile hospital. She can’t recall from where, but she’s run with it ever since.

“I can help, what is it?” Elise’s eyes glimmer in response, her body already facing the other way.

“J’ai left des provisions à la site. Can you obtenir?” Her hand rises toward the entrance of the medical tent, the flaps of a door glide slightly under the wind, enough to peek at a Jeep<sup>18</sup> surrounded by dawdling men. Leaning against the vehicle, the three men appear to be conversing, laughter breaking up their words.

“Why?” Elise re-straightens at the question.

“Why? What does this mean?”

Ruth focuses back on Elise’s surprised figure.

“Why did you leave it there?” Elise draws back to face her.

“Je can’t carry un stretcher and un jug, so c’est outside.” Ruth pauses, her mind analyzing each word. At times it was difficult to communicate with those brought in by the other U.N. members.<sup>3</sup> Their English was passable, but misunderstandings were common. It wasn’t unusual for a wounded soldier to come filling their ears with curses in their native tongue. The Korean ally soldiers preferred furtive glances and speculative glares. Though with enough pressure, their lips loosened and their wailing could rival the loudest of drill sergeants. Ruth usually shrank to her personal quarters when their language became more colorful. In those times, her hand would reach to the cross hanging against her chest, muttering prayers to drown out the outcries.

“I can go.” Shifting her weight, she slings her re-supplied knapsack over her shoulder.

“Merci.” Elise continues addressing the new patient, giving a curt wave behind her.

At Ruth’s arrival, the men leap into the car. Private Miller, a tall younger-looking man with a crooked nose, guides her to a seat in the back. The soldiers’ conversation continues throughout the drive. A howling wind prevents Ruth from entering the discourse, instead focusing her efforts on keeping dust out of her eyes. Clinging to the knapsack strap with one hand and the other acting as a shield for her eyes, Ruth turns to the view from the back of the Jeep. It’s closer than she realized. A brisk jog could take her to the battle’s edge<sup>20</sup>. The scenery gliding by teases a glimpse of the carnage, but not enough for one to grasp the full-scale of it. Ruth drags in all the fresh air her lungs can manage, keeping her eyes locked on the field.

The sight isn’t a new one. Destruction had become a familiar view whenever the site of the center changed. With each new location, the breath would lodge in her throat as she took in the surroundings. This battle had been no different. It was a smaller scale attack, so there were less mortar shells<sup>4</sup> used. The less shrapnel exploding, the less work she had to do. At least, that was how Elise phrased it. Ruth always found the phrase to chafe against her own ideals, so it stung whenever she agreed with it. While tending to one of the more vocal American soldiers, he expressed his own dislike of mortar. Adding that even one mistake could set it off. At the time, Ruth had nodded along, merely grateful he hadn’t spent his waking hours trying to flirt or curse.

The sight of rubble, broken stones, and crumbled cement outlining what used to be buildings<sup>5</sup> lead to her agreeing with him. Numerous beige and faded green and yellow stacks float in the sea of wreckage around them. The lumpy piles don’t budge as time progresses, and Ruth gets a full view of the identity of such piles. Each pile, unsturdy and half-heartedly made,

holds the bodies of those victims of the war. Corpses abandoned to be whipped by the wind. A smaller heap, near half a door ripped from its hinges, tilts and shifts. The movement starts at the bottom, one of the bodies wriggling to free itself from the weight above it. A poor soul, fighting to live on when left with the dead.

Ruth clutches her cross, uttering a small prayer for peaceful sleep, for both her and the wounded, as she shifts her gaze. Shuffling continues as she searches for any response in the men. Whatever topic she arrived at must be much more enthralling. Even injured, the soldier underneath exerts enough strength to push aside the weight above him. His compatriot flops to the ground as he adjusts himself against the remains of the building's wall. He's rather lively for someone close to death.

*Or is he just forgotten among the dead?*

Another concept Ruth had become familiar with by word of mouth. Depending on the scale and extent of casualties, one side could retreat, abandoning any who remain, breathing or otherwise. Those left behind become subject to their surroundings. Spring had just brushed in with its wave of lukewarm breezes<sup>6</sup>. Had winter stayed, they would've froze before succumbing to their injuries.

*He can be saved. Another opportunity.*

Getting Private Miller's attention, Ruth pleads for them to stop.

"I mean no offense, but are you lacking a marble or two? We can't stop" The man in the passenger car, Sergeant Taylor<sup>19</sup>, answers with a voice like gravel. She twists around, directing their attention outside with her pointer finger.

"There's someone out there."

"Yeah, the dead"

"No, no. He's alive. I think I can help him."

The private's head jerks back, blown back from her reply.

"Help him? He'll buy the farm soon if hasn't already. He can't be helped." It's Ruth's turn to be surprised.

"Can't be helped? What good am I if I can't help one soldier?<sup>7</sup> I can't be a nurse if I can't even manage that." The driver slows to a stop before searching past Ruth for the very soldier they speak of. When he spots the moving outline, his finger reaches out, pointing in its direction.

"That soldier?" Ruth nods.

"And what happens if he attacks you?" He folds his arms, raising a bushy eyebrow with his question. Ruth's sight remains on the figure.

"Then you'll need to bring me back. I just need to do what I can." Turning her back on the men, Ruth jumps out and starts in the direction of the man. The soldiers yell behind her, rushing to catch up.

"Stop! We don't know what else is still here!"

Dust kicks up with each heavy step, the wind picking up the particles and playing with them, tossing them in front of her as she runs. Her breathing becomes laborious, and the balance

between keeping pace and not tripping over any loose gravel or rocks takes its toll. She thanks God that she's a nurse and not a soldier.

Arriving, the mustard yellow uniform<sup>8</sup> is even more horrendous to the eyes, but Ruth's focus is centered on the red soaking through to the surface. The soldier's hand clutches his side, haphazardly covering the red splotch as it grows. Ruth kneels beside him, setting her bag next to her. The soldiers spread out, surveying the area as she works. Private Miller remains the closest by a few steps.

"I'm here to help. I'm going to check the wound." The man's chest was heaving, the energy and strength depleting from him. Most of it was used for escaping from underneath the piles. The sweat covering most of his skin is evidence of his ordeal. He puts up no fight as she strips him of his protective coat.

*Not a lot of good that did him.*

Lifting his shirt just above the red soaked portion, she finds the culprit. A thin, jagged gash that trails along his tanned skin into a hole. A shrapnel wound most likely from the mortar shell. He must've been in the outer radius of it, only facing the remains of the explosion. The shrapnel had carved across his side, before embedding itself into the side of his abdomen. He'd need surgery to remove the fragment and check if it punctured anything on its way in. The weight of the bodies may have pressed it further in, so a puncture was probable<sup>9</sup>.

*Alright, first steps first.*

He can't be moved or the shrapnel will move further, so she'd need to wait for a stretcher as they didn't bring one. The shrapnel could've retained its heat from the explosion with his body heat. She needs some way of cooling it down. Ruth rummages in her bag, but she doesn't know what could do the job. A water canteen. The soldiers keep one attached at the hip and the private remembers his today. After asking to borrow it, she yanks the cap off, pouring a splash onto the wound, the residual blood dripping with it. To disinfect, she grabs her bottle of alcohol and a clean cloth<sup>10</sup>. Dabbing the gash and inching closer to the hole the shrapnel piece made, she apologizes with each grunt and groan echoing from him. His body slumps forward, trying to engulf the pain. More sweat rises to his face, the moisture clumping together his black tufts of hair. Bandages come out last. She reflexively presses the end of the wrap to his skinny torso and wraps another arm around him to start the process. In an awkward hug-like position, the bandages are applied loosely, so as to not pressure the shrapnel further.

In the middle of tying off the bandage, distant hollers erupt from the direction of where the sergeant went. She whips around to see the private face down on the ground in front of her.

"Behind you!"

A second passes for realization to cross Ruth's face before she twists to look behind her. A flash of yellow and the sensation of cold steel against her head greet her as everything goes dark.

Her assailant, a Korean man of similar build to the man lying against a decimated building wall, lugs her over his shoulder while examining the surroundings. A shorter, stockier Korean man kneels beside the wounded man, lifting him like a bride. His arms cradle the injured

man's knees and shoulders to his chest, the bandaged wound facing outwards. A third man circles the area, looking around with the scope of his rifle. Unlike the buzzed cuts of the other two, his head appears free of hair, practically bald. Through a chorus of gunshots and the soldiers' yelling, Ruth and the wounded soldier remain slumped in the Korean soldiers arms as they charge off the field, headed in the direction opposite to the field hospital.

A cool sensation remains when muffled speech drags Ruth back to consciousness. Only when she pulls herself into a sitting position does her head throb and her muscles ache from the hard, concrete floor. Searching her dim surroundings, she notices clumps of leaves sticking to what look like bundles of hay.<sup>11</sup> The single light flickering is a kerosene<sup>12</sup> lamp resting by the guard. A show of shadows dance around her, waxing and waning with the movement of the lamp's flame. Metal bars entrap her and the shadows inside the dimly lit room, as though the man sitting guard is insufficient. His attention lies elsewhere, communicating with a stout figure standing near a wooden entrance.

"Igŏn ne chalmoshiya, kkaekküshi ch'iwŏ."

The language reminds her of some phrases the Korean allied soldiers use.

*I can't understand it anyway.*

The guard nods and watches as the stout figure leaves. Clapping his side, he sighs in a futile effort to readjust himself. The bloody bandage with her signature tie forces out a gasp. She suppresses it, clapping a hand over her mouth. When checking if he heard, the two lock eyes. Her whole body freezes, his gaze boring into her. Minutes pass by like hours with the two at an impasse. Searching about in the neck of her uniform, she clutches her cross. The smooth metal doing little to comfort her in her dank circumstances. His voice croaks out, quiet enough to be misheard. He clears his hoarse throat and repeats himself.

"Wae?"

"What?"

"W...why save..me?" He launches his question, a hint of disgust in his tone, like the words don't sit well with him. His accent and unfamiliarity with the language coats each syllable, almost rendering it indecipherable. After hearing the woes of numerous soldiers who couldn't claim any form of fluency in English, her skills in recognizing intention unveil his meaning. Ruth pauses, multiple questions clashing against her rising fear. Tentatively, she finds her voice.

"I didn't." The bandage grows darker with his blood for each minute the shrapnel remains embedded in his side. The exertion he had to endure to get to this building gave the metal piece every opportunity to drive itself deeper and puncture a vital organ.

"Why...try?"

*Try... to save him?*

"Because..." She trails off, searching for words he would know. Looking for what reason *she* acted that way.

"Because... I'm a nurse. I save people." She nods, content with her choice. He continues his puzzled glare. Ruth returns his gaze, the fear slipping like her grip on her cross. With a huff, he adjusts himself again, turning to face away from Ruth.

*Maybe he doesn't know what to say to that.*

Her hand drops to fiddle with the hem of her uniform. Splotches of blood and other bodily fluids rough up the texture near the bottom, the discoloration noticeable to only those adorned with similar stains.<sup>13</sup> The sight pulls at Ruth, conflicted on its meaning. Each one links to another injured soldier. As the owner, she can match each stain to the soldier it belongs to and the fate they met with. If it meant saving another person, she doesn't mind the largest of stains.

"Will you let me?" The Korean man twists too fast, gritting his teeth when he faces her.

"Let you... Mwō?" He emphasizes the last syllable enough for Ruth to grasp its meaning.

"Let me save you. I want to help you." He turns away, shaking his head at her suggestion.

"Narül tomnün migugin? Nan imi ch'ungbunhi mangshinül tanghaetta. Kuninch'öröm chungnün kōshi tō naül kōshida."

The words come out quick, like whips lashing at her. She flinches, confused and hurt by whatever he meant. Glancing around, her eyes settle on his bandage once again. Ruth takes a deep breath in to gather herself before pressing further.

"You probably don't like the idea, but you will die if I don't." Rising to her knees, she inches closer to the metal bars, inches away from the man. He pulls back, staring at her hands now clenching the bars. For a moment, he sits with his eyes locked on the blood dried to her hands. With weak fingers, he reaches into one of his pants pockets and pulls out a whistle. The metal gleaming under the kerosene light. She watches in wonder as he presses the whistle's mouthpiece to his lips.<sup>14</sup> The sound pierces her ears as she scrambles to cover them. Within seconds, another, taller man appears, with a darker green uniform.<sup>8</sup>

"Künyōnün marhago inni?"

"Ajikt'n chōrül taehanün kōsül kkūnnaego ship'ōhaeyo."

"Kūrōk'e hal su issülkka?" He glares at Ruth quickly before continuing.

"Akka hago issōssōyo. Manyang künyōga halsu ōptamyōn, namōji saramdūlgwa hamkke kaya haeyo."<sup>15</sup> The tall man ponders a bit, analyzing Ruth with a penetrating glare.

"Kūrōshijyo. Nega künyōrül ch'aegimjyō." Satisfied, he leaves. Ruth rests her eyes on her guard.

"What...did he say?" The man glares at her again, the anger fading behind it with his declining state.

"Do it." He reaches into the same pocket the whistle resides in and pulls out a key. The key lands beside her in a pile of leaves and she rushes to free herself. When she crouches beside him, his eyes drift closed, the last of his strength ebbing out of him. Knowing hands grab around for her knapsack. They swing about in the air, nothing to latch onto.

"My bag. Where's my bag?" Her voice rises with panic at his worsening state. Slowly blinking, he gestures to a wooden box with foreign characters painted on it. She fumbles with the box, prying it open. Ignoring the many other items that clutter the bottom of the box, she clutches her knapsack and returns to the man's side. Ripping the soaking wet bandage off, she studies the wound again. The gash is treatable with what she has on hand. The shrapnel is what worries her. The surgeon unit had been teaching her when they needed the extra hands, and she had a few of

the instruments on hand, but many she was missing. She had nothing to stitch the wound. Her hands scramble about in her bag, looking for anything she could use. A needle introduces itself with a small poke at her fingertip, sending her hand flying. Reaching back in, she finds the needle and thread she used to repair her worn clothes. With alcohol to sterilize the needle and thread, it would have to be enough.

“Bite down on this.” Ruth shoves a clump of bandages into his mouth, with no protest on his end. Applying alcohol to the wound again, she prepares two of her needles with penicillin and a sedative. Without hesitation, she stabs one needle into a vein trailing along his arm and the other closer to the wound on the abdomen. The lack of sound sends more panic through Ruth. Two fingers check his pulse, weak and faint, and his breathing, shallow and labored.

“Just hold on a little longer.” Pulling out her surgical pliers, she digs into the wound. The shrapnel hadn’t gone far inside, but it digs into the sides of the wound, tearing at the flesh. After removing the shrapnel, she presses another bandage on it to clear the blood. Dousing the needle and thread in alcohol, she deftly moves to suture the wound closed. Removing the bloody bandages, another clean bandage finds a place at the top of the wound and stays secured with a few torn pieces of adhesive. Wiping the sweat from her forehead, she searches her knapsack for painkillers. When she does, it goes into the arm like the sedative through a needle.

“I hope that’s enough,” The whisper hangs in the air, haunting her. Collecting some hay to sit on, Ruth adjusts herself beside the soldier. Clutching her knees to her chest, her eyes flicker between his figure and a light sleep. A few hours of keeping watch pass until his breathing evens and releases the occasional grunt in pain. Soon after, two soldiers in the same mustard yellow uniform enter the room. One shoos Ruth back into her cell, staring at her with daggers for eyes. The other stockier soldier squats beside the cell guard, sticking a finger a hair’s breadth below his nose to check for breathing. The two exchange glances and nod as Ruth watches on. One taking the legs and the other hooking his arms under his shoulders, they lift the guard and take him out of the room despite any protest Ruth makes.

*Did I do it? Is he safe?*

Clutching her cross in her hand again, she fashions a pillow from the surrounding hay and forces her eyes closed. No amount of stuffing eases her as sleep continues to elude her. When she drifts, the faces of the wounded soldier and Private Miller taunt her. Eventually, as the kerosene lamp dims and the room grows darker, sleep envelops her.

Sharp knocking awakens her. An almost bald soldier awaits next to the steel bars, the door wide open. Ruth blinks slowly, looking around the cell. The soldier knocks again, louder this time. She slides up from the floor, stumbling forward a few steps. A finger taps the bars with increasing intensity as the soldier waits. Exiting the cell, the soldier grasps her arm tightly and drags her out. The barn-like building opens up to dirt fields, the dust lifting up and mixing with the gray-toned sky. Long, thin buildings with thatched roofs line up perpendicular to the haphazard fencing<sup>21</sup>. Mud stains the faces Ruth glimpses as the soldier hauls her away. Some are so coated with dirt, that it takes a second or two to distinguish the Korean from the American. It

becomes easier to tell as she notices the Americans lined up, bumping into each other when a soldier shoves them. The almost-bald soldier yanks Ruth inside one of the thatched buildings.

The room they enter is identical to the cell she slept in. Hay stacked up in corners of the cold cement ground. Replacing the steel barred cells, though, is a single metal chair with someone sitting slumped over in it. His feet are bare, scraped and scratched enough for the color to change to a slight purple. His body is bound with thick, course ropes. Each strand rubbing rashes into exposed skin. Blood drips from his face, a broken nose a likely cause. Ruth's gaze travels down his arms to his hands, her stomach flipping at the sight. Only two fingernails remain on the left hand, the right keeping three<sup>24</sup>. She pushes to go closer, but the soldier's arm holds firm.

"No."

*No? Then why am I here?*

As if in response, the door opens behind them. Whoever entered walks into view, the same man in the green uniform from the night prior. He analyzes the bound man, a smirk flashing on his face before catching Ruth's gaze.

"You. Keep him alive." His accent is much heavier than the soldier she had healed, as though speaking another language altogether. He gestures to the man before him. Giving a hard stare, he waits.

"He'll need to be untied." Pausing, he clasps a hand to the beaten man's shoulder.

"No untying. Just not dead." Her bags weighs heavier on her shoulder as the soldier lets go of her arm. Searching for some form of confirmation or further information, she glances between the two. Neither move, only some minor annoyed fiddling from the man in the green uniform. Resigning to the task, Ruth kneels beside the bound man.

*Luckily, he'll only need basic first aid.*

Taking the man's hands in hers, she dabs each finger missing a nail with alcohol. He doesn't flinch. The pain must've made him pass out. Regardless, she checks his vitals. Level and steady, sufficient for a sleeping man. An adhesive is applied to each finger she treats, wiping away any excess blood that remains on them. The same treatment applies for the feet, alcohol to clean and bandages to wrap them. That leaves the broken nose last. Gently, Ruth uses her hand to lift his head up. Not many scratches adorn it in comparison to the bruising, especially around the nose and eyes. One eye has a swollen lower lid, so it'll need similar treatment to the swollen nose.

"I need ice."

"No ice."

"Do you have anything cold?" The man in the green uniform waves of the soldier. A few minutes later he returns with a cloth covering some kind of cold, red vegetable. Ruth stares at the item for a few seconds of baffled confusion before pressing it onto the man's face. The vegetable mashes in her hand, but it remains close to the swollen areas.



“He’ll need this everyday for the swelling. Everything else will only need time and new bandages,” Ruth says, rising to her feet. The man nods his head, content. He turns to the soldier next to Ruth.

“Kūnyörül tashi teryōga.” The soldier returns his grip to her arm and moves to exit.

“Wait, is that it? I need to see the other man! The one who was dying! Is he alive? Can I see hi-” Her words get cut off by the door closing behind them.

Returning to the cell she slept in, the soldier locks the steel door, standing guard in front of it. He leaves once, coming back with sickly gray gruel for her to eat. The rest of the time, she remains locked inside, braiding together pieces of hay when boredom takes over.

Days go by like this. Woken up in the cell, leave to treat varying wounds inflicted on the prisoner’s held there, and come back to the cell for her one meal and rest. It didn’t take long for Ruth to figure it out. Torture became the only reason people she treated before returned with the same injuries. As the hours in between grew longer, Ruth questioned whether her nails would meet the same fate as the prisoners from her new habit of picking them until they bled. The sight started to become a familiar one, a conclusion Ruth felt sick to admit. Before she came, many had theirs’ pulled without treatment. Each fingertip dark by the infection spreading.

Occasionally, the man she was treating would be conscious. Sometimes in other languages, but the meaning was constant.

*Help me.*

She stayed silent. Fear or hopelessness, whatever it was tore apart her words until she wouldn’t utter a single one. On her routine of being towed away, some of the soldiers catch her eye. Recollection brings a speck of hope back in their eyes and they greet her with a smile.

*Maybe they remember me?*

When the bandages dwindle to scraps and her alcohol reduces to a few drops, Ruth clutches her cross as she ponders her words. Time had stopped for her, the sun rising and heating the ground she slept on being the main way to count. Only later did she find a rock from the deteriorating wall, she drew lines in one corner of the cell with it to track the days. Covering it with straw, she hid it in case the guarding soldier noticed. With the passage of time, her voice became mute. Opening her mouth, she croaks out to the soldier.

“I need more supplies. The box might have some.” The soldier glances at her, as stoic as always.

“Box? The square thing over there?” Using her fingers, she draws a square in the air and gestures to the wooden box off to the side. Silently, the soldier marches to the box, lifting the lid with ease. He pulls up a fist full of knapsack straps, each attached to a bag of varying sizes. Opening each one, he rummages through the contents, pulling out knives and items with blades. Satisfied, he drops the bags into the cell and resumes his post. Ruth lunges at the bags, sorting through the items and replacing some from her own.

“Thank you.” The soldier doesn’t look back, his gaze ever forward. She fiddles with one of the bag’s straps, hesitating.

“Can I see him?” No response is heard.

Another few weeks go by with the same routine. Ruth's pleas for water increase as the humid air seeps into her cell day by day<sup>25</sup>. The man in green appears less and less, but the prisoners begin to split in physical status. The ones that smile endure harsher beatings, entailing more laborious treatments and painkillers. Those that avoid her eyes start to heal. Broken noses lose swelling and fingernails grow. Curiosity takes root in Ruth. One day, while replacing a few of one prisoner's bandages, she allowed some room for her festering curiosity.

"Are they feeding you more?" The prisoner stiffens, her word throwing him off. He doesn't respond for the rest of the session. She tries again with another question on an equally healing prisoner.

"Are they treating you better?" His eyes widen, glancing all about the room. Resting on the soldier behind her, he opens his mouth.

"Yes."

"Is there a reason for that?" His eyes stay glued to the soldier as he nods.

"Can you tell me what that is?" Shaking his head, she sighs. On multiple other occasions, she asked the same question. All wanted to avoid it, the shame etched into their faces. Another day passed when she met a particularly peculiar prisoner. He met her eyes, a slight smile in them. She had treated him prior, but he had always remained unconscious. Piquing her blooming curiosity, she raises the same questions.

"Are they treating you better?"

"Certainly." His chipper response causes Ruth to fumbles with the bandages on his hands, but she catches herself.

"Then, is there a reason for that?" No hesitation lies in his eyes as they meet hers.

"I'm no longer an enemy. I'm a comrade<sup>23</sup>." He grins, like a dog wanting a reward.

*A comrade?*

"How are you a comrade?" His head tilts, almost confused.

"I saw the mistake in my way of thinking. They showed me the right way."

*Oh no... They messed with his mind<sup>22</sup>.*

Ruth is about to question him further when the soldier yanks her away, pulling her out of the building and back to her cell. The process begins again, the lunacy beginning to spread as time wears on. Some soldiers that smiled at her drop off. She would ask where they went, but she's too afraid of not receiving an answer. Worse still if she did. Forced towards the treating room for what feels like the hundredth time, the soldier tightens his grip and pursues another route, dragging her behind him. The building layout inside is much the same, but a bed lies to the side instead of a chair in the middle. The man in green stands in the center of the room.

"Finish treatment." He shuffles aside, leaving the bed in full view. The bed has a wooden frame, the mattress is decorated with hundreds of hay strands sticking out. The sheets look rough, nothing soft like cotton or linen. If she didn't know any better, she would've mistaken it for dyed paper. In the midst of her examination, the bed's occupant catches her attention. The man is Korean, unlike most others she treated. His hair has grown out an inch, straight pieces

flipping across his forehead and ears. Their eyes meet, his eyes softening slightly. Ruth furrows her brow.

*Why is he so familiar?*

Her view shifts to his side, where his bandages stay.

“You!” The man she treated first, the reason she was here. Relief floods her, following quickly with a surge of anger. The soldier doesn’t stop her when she stomps toward the bed. Tearing off the bandages, she doesn’t flinch when he cries out in pain. The infection is the first thing she notices. The thread she had used aided in sealing the wound for healing, but without being taken out, it created its own, smaller wound to fester. With her pliers and scissors, she removes the thread, now slick with blood and grime. Her movements are rougher, no painkiller administered. He grits his teeth, but grabs for her arm as she readies her needle.

“Why... do you need that?” She squeezes free from his grip, too furious to meet his eyes again.

“I couldn’t treat you before, so now its infected. This helps that.” Penicillin fills the needle, clearing air pockets with a couple taps of her fingers. Without a warning, she jabs it into the infected area. He groans from the pain, glaring at her as she removes the needle. Haphazardly, she re-bandages the area.

*More than he deserves.*

Fed up, she exits the building. The soldier runs to catch up to her, the familiar hand clasping around her arm as a guide.

She falls into a rhythm again, with the man that brought her here as an unwelcome addition. Greeting him only with glares at first, her eyes grow tired. She settles for apathy. Treating him enough to be excused. The other prisoners start to take notice, their smiles switching from gratitude to sympathy.


*Only for them.* Those holding out. Those who haven’t plastered a sickening smile to appease their captors.

*I hope, for their sakes, that they resist. Until we’re found, they need to endure. For sanity is fragile, and being forgotten would shatter what remains.*

## Notes

1. <https://www.usmilitariaforum.com/forums/index.php?/topic/15057-what-bag-would-a-korean-war-corpsman-carry/>



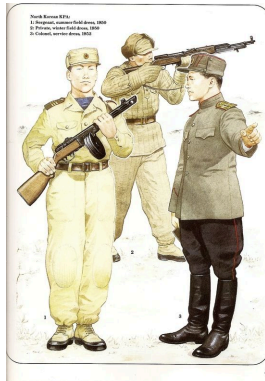
- a.
  - b. These bags are the medical bags used by nurses in the Korean war. Originally they are dark green, but they weather with age.
2. <https://www.iwm.org.uk/history/25-photographs-of-the-korean-war>  

  - a.
  - b. Pictured above is a group of soldiers. The uniform mentioned has similar packs as the ones pictured.
3. "Korean War." Encyclopædia Britannica. <https://www.britannica.com/event/Korean-War>.
    - a. Above is a detailed overview of the Korean War. This source was mainly utilized as evidence for other United Nation members that participated in the war. Those involved are the US, Great Britain, Turkey, France, Belgium, The Netherlands, Greece, Colombia, Thailand, Ethiopia, and the Philippines. France may have not sent nurses, but they were there as soldiers. There could be someone who would understand Elise.
  4. "Soldiers Seek Shelter from Mortar Shells in Korea, April 11, 1951." IDCA. July 24, 2020.  
<https://iowaculture.gov/history/education/educator-resources/primary-source-sets/korean-war-iowa/soldiers-seek>.
    - a. Mortars were a common weapon in the Korean war. This source describes how mortars were used similar to how they are described in the story.
  5. Operation Killer.  
<http://gunnygenes.koreanwar-educator.org/korea/1951/killer.htm>.
    - a. Though the mountainous terrain isn't described in my story, time period and actors involved are the same. This particular battle is in a more spring period with North Koreans playing a part. It was rare for the two to line up, but Operation Killer is one such instance.
  6. U.S. Korean War Timeline 1951 - America's Best History.  
<https://americasbesthistory.com/timelinekoreanwar1951.html>.
    - a. This source pertains to where Operation Killer lines up with the rest of the Korean War. With this, we know what was available at the time and what hadn't yet occurred.

7.

- a. King, Booker. "The Mobile Army Surgical Hospital (MASH): A Military and Surgical Legacy" *Journal of the National Medical Association* 97. No. 5 (May 2005):648-56
    - i. This source provides information on portable on-site hospitals like the ones that Ruth works in along with the work they provide inside.
  - b. The Nursing Code of Ethics: Its Value, Its History.
 

<https://ojin.nursingworld.org/MainMenuCategories/ANAMarketplace/ANAPeriodicals/OJIN/TableofContents/Vol-20-2015/No2-May-2015/The-Nursing-Code-of-Ethics-Its-Value-Its-History.html>.

    - i. Since I have referenced some form of ethics that Ruth holds as a nurse, this source provides what Code of Ethics she might be following considering the time period.
8. [https://www.google.com/url?q=http://img300.imageshack.us/img300/5369/scansione0003z.jpg&sa=D&source=docs&ust=1636571847486000&usg=AOvVaw2QfZhwtFtvXotz\\_zGHIq\\_1](https://www.google.com/url?q=http://img300.imageshack.us/img300/5369/scansione0003z.jpg&sa=D&source=docs&ust=1636571847486000&usg=AOvVaw2QfZhwtFtvXotz_zGHIq_1)



- a.
  - b. Much like the description of the yellow uniform, above is pictured what other soldiers wore from the North Korean side.
- 9.
- a. Jeffery, Steven L.a. "The Management of Combat Wounds: The British Military Experience." *Advances in Wound Care* 5, no. 10 (2016): 464-73. doi:10.1089/wound.2015.0653.
  - b. Singh, Kj, and A. Galagali. "Abdominal Trauma in Combat." *Medical Journal Armed Forces India* 66, no. 4 (2010): 333-37. doi:10.1016/s0377-1237(10)80011-5.
  - c. Both of these sources provide a guide as to the treatment Ruth provides for the wounded soldier that is best for the wounds he has. A few are taken directly, others are based on what seemed best according to other similar wounds
- 10.
- a. Manring, M. M., Alan Hawk, Jason H. Calhoun, and Romney C. Andersen. "Treatment of War Wounds: A Historical Review." *Clinical Orthopaedics & Related Research* 467, no. 8 (2009): 2168-191. doi:10.1007/s11999-009-0738-5.
  - b. "Treating the Wounded in Wartime." Science Museum. <https://www.sciencemuseum.org.uk/objects-and-stories/medicine/treating-Wounded-wartime>.
  - c. These sources are still describing the wounds, but are describing how they

would've been treated in the time of the Korean War as what was available is much different considering the medicines that are available.

11. <https://ak.picdn.net/shutterstock/videos/1078020008/thumb/1.jpg?ip=x480>



- a.
- b. Pictured above is from a historical movie set in the Korean War. Those inside are prisoners of war with North Korean soldiers talking to them. In my story, I've kept the hay and farm like atmosphere, but I added steel bars, like a jail almost. I felt that even though North Korea may have not built something similar, a farm house wouldn't be enough to keep prisoners of war in without them trying to escape. Steel bars would make that much more difficult to do.
12. Peter Hayes, David von Hippel, Roger Cavazos, "SANCTIONING KEROSENE AND JET FUEL IN NORTH KOREA", NAPSNet Policy Forum, March 10, 2016, <https://nautilus.org/napsnet/napsnet-policy-forum/sanctioning-kerosene-and-jet-fuel-in-north-korea/>
- a. Considering the time period and the question of what the country had access to, the above source describes the situation with kerosene. The timeline of it being in North Korea was in line with the Korean War.
13. <https://legionmagazine.com/en/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/web2011-bvd864-01.jpg>



- a.
- b. Above is pictured a few Korean War nurses in their uniform similar to those described in the story that Ruth is wearing. Unfortunately, the color isn't featured due to the quality of the photo, but we can infer it being a darker color.
14. <https://irp.fas.org/doddir/army/atp7-100-2.pdf>
- a. For the story, there needed to be a way to communicate. I wondered how this could be done considering two nationalities were on the side of North Korea. North Koreans and Chinese spoke different languages, so they needed a way to communicate. This source provides how they are able to do so through whistles. I

worry now that the whistle described is different from the one intended from the source.

15. Kim, Jin-Hyouk, and Mi-Ra Moon. "The Socialist Camp's North Korean Medical Support and Exchange (1945-1958): Between Learning from the Soviet Union and Independent Course." *Korean Journal of Medical History* 28, no. 1 (2019): 139-90. doi:10.13081/kjmh.2019.28.139.
  - a. The source above describes the exchange of medical knowledge. What medical knowledge was available to North Koreans at the time wasn't available in the source, but most were in the time following the Korean War, so I presumed that there was less advancements especially when considering the advancements the U.S. was experiencing.
16. Emanuele, Robert L. "Memories of 'M\*A\*S\*H' by a Real-life MASH Doctor." *Chicagotribune.com*. May 11, 2019.  
<https://www.chicagotribune.com/opinion/commentary/ct-korea-war-mash-doctors-perspec-0529-jm-embargo-friday-6-a-m--20170526-story.html>.
  - a. Provided above is an account of what it was like to work in MASH. This source also provides information on the "doctor draft" that ensured even those with little experience could assist in the war effort as a medical practitioner.
17. "10 Captivating Snapshots of Nurses During the Korean War." *GUIDE TO NURSING DEGREES*.  
<https://www.nursedegree.net/10-captivating-snapshots-of-nurses-during-the-korean-war/>.
  - a. Among the many pictures provided in the source above, there is one covering the Norwegian MASH unit. Elise Bandemer is French and there doesn't seem to be any indication that the UN provided nurses from other countries aside from the US and Norway. Perhaps she is an American immigrant who was wanting to add into the war. In most part, I wanted to state that other UN members were involved and how communication is difficult.
18. Heatley, Tyler. "The Dodge M37 Is An Unsung Hero Of The Korean War: Motorious.com." *Motorious*. May 12, 2020.  
<https://buy.motorious.com/articles/news/316434/the-dodge-m37-is-an-unsung-hero-of-the-korean-war>.
  - a. The Jeep that Ruth rides is similar to the make and model of the one pictured in the source above. I wanted the open back, so Ruth could get a full view of what was around her as they drove. I imagine that they drove somewhat slower than we think because the terrain was hazardous regardless of how fast the jeep could actually go.
19. "Army Military Ranks." *MilitaryBenefits.info*. October 26, 2021.  
<https://militarybenefits.info/army-ranks/>.

- a. In order to accurately depict the ranks of the soldiers that would be just low enough to be nearby and inexperienced enough for Ruth to be captured later. I'm unsure as to how that would've gone in reality, but I suppose lower ranked soldiers would have less strategic planning experience.
- 20. 8076th MASH History. [http://the45thsurg.freesevers.com/8076th\\_MASH.html](http://the45thsurg.freesevers.com/8076th_MASH.html).
  - a. Through the description of one of the many field hospitals under the MASH unit, it is described that the closest of hospitals would be 10-20 miles away. This most certainly anything one could walk to, so Ruth had to have a form of transportation like a vehicle.
- 21. Agency, Defense POW/MIA Accounting. DPAA Famweb Korean War POWs. <https://dpaa-mil.sites.crmforce.mil/dpaaFamWebInKoreanWarPOW>.



- a.
- b. This source provides insight on the state of Prisoner of War camps along with images of what they look like, I especially made use of the thatched roofing that appears in one of the pictures.
- 22. Kim, Monica. "Brainwashed." Foreign Policy. February 18, 2019. <https://foreignpolicy.com/2019/02/18/brainwashed-north-korea-prisoners-of-war-monica-kim/>.
  - a. This source discusses the concept of brainwashing and how it was handled in the U.S. after the repatriation started processing. This is useful to figure out how other Americans perceived those who were "brainwashed".
- 23. "반공의 로컬과 동아시아 지역냉전 - 대만 반공르포 과 남한 반공극." Korea Open Access Journals. [https://www.kci.go.kr/kciportal/landing/article.kci?arti\\_id=ART002692556](https://www.kci.go.kr/kciportal/landing/article.kci?arti_id=ART002692556).
  - a. This source, though entirely in Korean, describes various individuals involved in anti-communist and pro-communist influences during the Korean War through stories similar to the events that transpired. The descriptions are used to understand what type of propaganda or "brainwashing" the POWs are experiencing outside of the torture in my story.
- 24. Defrin, R., K. Ginzburg, M. Mikulincer, and Z. Solomon. "The Long-term Impact of Tissue Injury on Pain Processing and Modulation: A Study on Ex-prisoners of War Who Underwent Torture." European Journal of Pain 18, no. 4 (2013): 548-58. doi:10.1002/j.1532-2149.2013.00394.x.
  - a. This source, though not describing the exact torture used in the Korean War,



explains what was commonly used and what effects it has on the individuals in the present.

25. "The POW Experience." Korean War Legacy. July 04, 2020.

<https://koreanwarlegacy.org/chapters/the-pow-experience/>.

- a. The insights provided from this source entail what a POW experienced, especially an American one. What they had to go through to survive is valuable here.