



Every Falling Star

Books Reviewed:

[Every Falling Star](#) [1]

Issue:

[221](#) [2]

Reviewer:

[Val Randall](#) [3]

Editor's Choice:

off

Media type:

Book

BfK Rating:

5

This heart-wrenching book is the true story of Sungju Lee's life in North Korea. During his early years he lived a life of privilege in the nation's capital, Pyongyang - his father an army officer and Sungju's destiny to follow him. The family's lifestyle is described in glittering detail, giving a chilling insight into how military rule is perpetuated. Sungju is trained, indoctrinated and shielded from the horrors of life outside the confines of the capital into which, all too soon, he is to be plunged.

Suddenly and without explanation his family leaves the capital for what is first described as a holiday and later, truthfully, as exile away from the seat of power for an offence committed by his father which cannot be explained for fear of retribution on those who still remain in North Korea. The family soon run out of money and starvation begins to be a real threat. Sungju's life is reduced to endurance and a realisation that the government has abandoned all who live in this place and all areas like it, keeping them under control by means of arrests, violence and even public execution.

When Sungju's parents leave, one after the other, to try to find food across the Chinese border and do not return he has no option but to live on the streets with his gang, his `brothers' and embrace a life of crime, animal cunning, drink, drugs and danger. The story is starkly told, brought to life through the narrative voice of Sungju and sparing the reader none of the appalling details of his existence. This is a powerful medium, making an indelible impact because of the simple, unvarnished nature of the telling.

The book contains a brief section explaining the history of 20th century Korea and there is a glossary of Korean words used in the text. These two additions provide a means of educating young readers, thus making them aware of the precarious and often horrific nature of lives lived within the confines of North Korea.

Source URL (retrieved on Jun '19): <http://booksforkeeps.co.uk/issue/221/childrens-books/reviews/every-falling-star>

Links:

[1] <http://booksforkeeps.co.uk/childrens-books/every-falling-star>

[2] <http://booksforkeeps.co.uk/issue/221>

[3] <http://booksforkeeps.co.uk/member/val-randall>