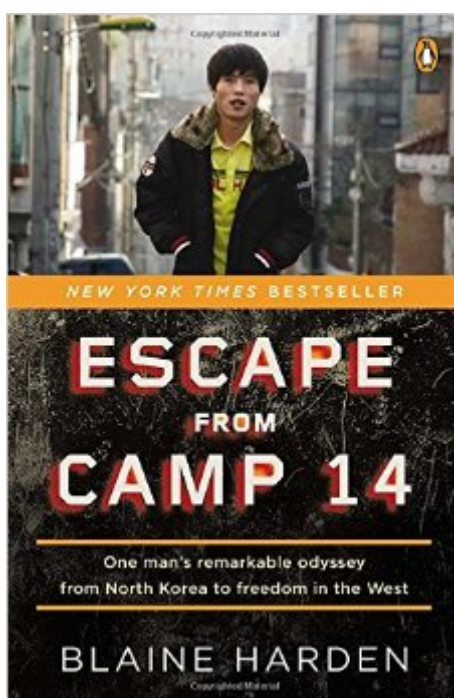


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# Escape From Camp 14: One Man's Remarkable Odyssey From North Korea To Freedom In The West



## Synopsis

With a New Foreword The heartwrenching New York Times bestseller about the only known person born inside a North Korean prison camp to have escaped. Blaine Harden's latest book, *King of Spies*, will be available from Viking in Fall 2017. North Korea's political prison camps have existed twice as long as Stalin's Soviet gulags and twelve times as long as the Nazi concentration camps. No one born and raised in these camps is known to have escaped. No one, that is, except Shin Dong-hyuk. In *Escape From Camp 14*, Blaine Harden unlocks the secrets of the world's most repressive totalitarian state through the story of Shin's shocking imprisonment and his astounding getaway. Shin knew nothing of civilized existence—he saw his mother as a competitor for food, guards raised him to be a snitch, and he witnessed the execution of his mother and brother. The late "Dear Leader" Kim Jong Il was recognized throughout the world, but his country remains sealed as his third son and chosen heir, Kim Jong Eun, consolidates power. Few foreigners are allowed in, and few North Koreans are able to leave. North Korea is hungry, bankrupt, and armed with nuclear weapons. It is also a human rights catastrophe. Between 150,000 and 200,000 people work as slaves in its political prison camps. These camps are clearly visible in satellite photographs, yet North Korea's government denies they exist. Harden's harrowing narrative exposes this hidden dystopia, focusing on an extraordinary young man who came of age inside the highest security prison in the highest security state. *Escape from Camp 14* offers an unequalled inside account of one of the world's darkest nations. It is a tale of endurance and courage, survival and hope.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Blaine Harden's chronicle of Shin Dong-hyuk's life in a North Korean prison camp and his eventual escape is a slim, searing, humble book as close to perfect as these volumes of anguished testimony can be. Blaine Harden

"Harden's book, besides being a gripping story, unsparingly told, carries a freight of intelligence about this black hole of a country." Bill Keller, The New York Times

"The central character in Blaine Harden's extraordinary new book *Escape from Camp 14* reveals more in 200 pages about human darkness in the ghastliest corner of the world's cruelest dictatorship than a thousand textbooks ever could . . . *Escape from Camp 14*, the story of Shin's awakening, escape and new beginning, is a riveting, remarkable book that should be required reading in every high-school or college-civics class. Like "The Diary of Anne Frank" or Dith Pran's account of his flight from Pol Pot's genocide in Cambodia, it's impossible to read this excruciatingly personal account of systemic monstrosities without fearing you might just swallow your own heart . . . Harden's wisdom as a writer shines on every page." The Seattle Times

"U.S. policymakers wonder what changes may arise after the recent death of North Korean leader Kim Jong Il, this gripping book should raise awareness of the brutality that underscores this strange land. Without interrupting the narrative, Harden skillfully weaves in details of North Korea's history, politics and society, providing context for Shin's plight." The Associated Press

"A book without parallel, *Escape from Camp 14* is a riveting nightmare that bears witness to the worst inhumanity, an unbearable tragedy magnified by the fact that the horror continues at this very moment without an end in sight." Terry Hong, Christian Science Monitor

"A remarkable story, [*Escape from Camp 14*] is a searing account of one man's incarceration and personal awakening in North Korea's highest-security prison." The Wall Street Journal

"As an action story, the tale of Shin's breakout and flight is pure *The Great Escape*, full of feats of desperate bravery and miraculous good luck. As a human story it is gut wrenching; if what he was made to endure, especially that he was forced to view his own family merely as competitors for food, was written in a movie script, you would think the writer was overreaching. But perhaps most important is the light the book shines on an under-discussed issue, an issue on which the West may one day be called into account for its inactivity." The Daily Beast

"A riveting new biography . . . If you want a singular perspective on what goes on inside the rogue regime, then you must read [this] story. It's a harrowing tale of endurance and courage, at times grim but ultimately life-affirming."

“CNN” [Shin] tale becomes even more gripping after his unprecedented journey . . . after he realizes that he has been raised as something less than human. He gradually, haltingly and, so far, with mixed success sets out to remake himself as a moral, feeling human being. Fred Hiatt, *The Washington Post* “If you have a soul, you will be changed forever by Blaine Harden’s *Escape from Camp 14* . . . Harden masterfully allows us to know Shin, not as a giant but as a man, struggling to understand what was done to him and what he was forced to do to survive. By doing so, *Escape from Camp 14* stands as a searing indictment of a depraved regime and a tribute to all those who cling to their humanity in the face of evil. Mitchell Zuckoff, *New York Times* bestselling author of *Lost in Shangri-La* “This is a story unlike any other . . . More so than any other book on North Korea, including my own, *Escape from Camp 14* exposes the cruelty that is the underpinning of Kim Jong Il’s regime. Blaine Harden, a veteran foreign correspondent from *The Washington Post*, tells this story masterfully . . . The integrity of this book, shines through on every page. Barbara Demick, author of *Nothing to Envy: Ordinary Lives in North Korea* “In *Escape from Camp 14*, Harden chronicles Shin’s amazing journey, from his very first memory a public execution he witnessed as a 4-year-old to his work with human rights advocacy groups in South Korea and the United States . . . By retelling Shin’s against-all-odds exodus, Harden casts a harsh light on a moral embarrassment that has existed 12 times longer than the Nazi concentration camps. Readers won’t be able to forget Shin’s boyish, emancipated smile the new face of freedom trumping repression. Will Lizlo, *Minneapolis Star-Tribune* “Blaine Harden of the *Washington Post* is an experienced reporter of other hellholes, such as the Congo, Serbia, and Ethiopia. These, he makes clear, are success stories compared to North Korea . . . Harden deserves a lot more than; Ewow for this terrifying, grim and, at the very end, slightly hopeful story of a damaged man still alive only by chance, whose life, even in freedom, has been dreadful. Literary Review “Harden tells a gripping story. Readers learn of Shin’s gradual discovery of the world at large, nonadversarial human relationships, literature, and hope and the struggles ahead. A book that all adults should read. Library Journal (starred review) “[A] chilling [and] remarkable story of deliverance from a hidden land. Kirkus Reviews “With a protagonist born into a life of backbreaking labor, cutthroat rivalries, and a nearly complete absence of human affection, Harden’s book reads like a dystopian thriller. But this isn’t fiction it’s the biography of Shin Dong-hyuk. Publishers Weekly

In *Escape from Camp 14*, Blaine Harden best seller masterfully allows us to know Shin, not as a hero but as a man, by telling us a story what was done to him by the repressive government of North Korea and what he was forced to do to survive. Shin was born in Camp 14, the son to two political prisoners, and was condemned from birth to a life of hunger and misery in forced labor. Prisoners in the camp were not taught to value things like friendship and family. Shin's higher power in the camp were food, the guards and the government teachers, from many of whom he suffered sadistic beatings and torture. He was taught to inform on family and friends- and to feel indifference and no remorse for doing so. This was evident when one of his teachers beat to death a six year old classmate. When Shin was 13 years old, he told the night guard of his school with another boy of the escape plan by his mother and brother, as informing was something he was taught to do from an early age, and he hoped to be rewarded. However, the school night guard took full credit for discovering the plan, and rather than being rewarded, Shin was arrested and guards tortured him for four days to extract more information, believing him to be part of the plan to escape. After approximately seven months spent in a tiny concrete prison cell, Shin and his father were forced to watch the public executions of Shin's mother and brother. At age 23, Shin decides to escape with fellow prisoner Park. Park attempted to go through thru an electric fence first, but was fatally electrocuted. Shin managed to escape using Park's body as a shield to ground the current, but still suffered severe burns and permanent scars when his legs slipped onto the lowermost wire as he crawled over Park's body. After escaping, Shin broke into a nearby farmer's barn and found an old military uniform. Wearing the uniform, he was able to pass for a North Korean soldier. He survived by scrounging and stealing food. Eventually, he reached the northern border with China and bribed destitute North Korean border guards with food and cigarettes. After spending some time working as a laborer in different parts of China, Shin was accidentally found by a journalist in a restaurant, who brought him to the South Korean embassy for asylum. Living in the US today, Shin does work as a human rights advocate.

This is my first book review. I am a voracious reader. However, I did not write a book review until I listened to the audio book. One of the reasons that I did not write a book review was because I was not a native English speaker. Writing in English was not easy to me. However, after listening to the book, I felt like I had to write anything, at least saying thanks to the author and Shin, the protagonist, who had to endure unimaginable horror and is brave enough to share his story with the world. Before I listened to the audio book, I had a vague idea of North Korea. For example, NKorean dictator, Kim

Jung Il is less human, mentally ill and very dangerous. He exploited NKoreans and let them starve to death. As the author mentioned in the book, I was one of many SKoreans who were simply ignorant and indifferent to Nkorea. I felt sorry for them but that was it. Their story was one of the typical stories of poor communist countries. Their miserable and horrible story did not affect me on personal level until I encountered the book. It was a shocking and eye opening experience to me. Its horrifying story scared me to death. I had to pause many times listening to the book because I could not stop crying, or simply bear his horrible experience any more. After reading the book, I referred it to my family and friends hoping that more SKoreans be aware of the serious problems of NKoreans. I pray for NKoreans whose rights have been completely violated by their greedy, stupid, and less human dictators, Kim's family. I still do not know what exactly I can do to help NKoreans but I will make my efforts to let more SKoreans know the dire reality of NKoreans. I will continue to have interest in unification of two Koreas and support LiNK (Liberty in North Korean). Again, I sincerely thank to Shin whose courage is indescribable, unimaginable, and inspirational. Thanks to him, I realize that my complaints on life is just luxurious excuses. I envy his inner strength. I pray for his inner peace and freedom. I am also grateful to the author who made Shin's story available to the world in such a powerful way.

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