

She had no faith in humanity. The look in someone's eyes, the beliefs they espoused, the eloquence with which they did so, were, she knew, no guarantee of anything. She knew that the only life left to her was one hemmed in by niggling doubts and cold questions.

The fountain had been dry that afternoon. Gun-toting soldiers were hauling fresh bodies over to the wall in front of the Provincial Office. They dragged them by the legs, so that the backs of their heads bumped and scraped against the ground, then tossed them next to the bodies that had already been dumped there. Some of the soldiers had had a bright idea for increasing the efficiency of this process: a small group was marching into the Provincial Office's inner yard, each holding a corner or edge of a huge waterproof tarp on which the corpses of a dozen people were being transported in one go. When Eun-sook had walked by, unable to prevent her eyes from widening at the sight, three soldiers rushed over and aimed their guns at her chest. *Where are you going? Just home. I've been visiting my aunt; she's not well.* Her voice had been cool and steady, but her upper lip trembled as she spoke.

She left the square on their orders, making an effort to regulate her steps. When she reached Daein Market, a huge tank came roaring down the main road. *They want to show everyone that it's all over*, she'd thought to herself, almost absentmindedly. *That all the protesters have been killed.*

The neighborhood where she lived with her parents, though close to the university district, was so utterly devoid of human life, it was as though a plague had ravaged it. When she rang the bell, her father instantly came running out, only unlocking the main gate for the brief time it took to usher her inside. He got her to hide up in the kitchen loft, then moved the tall cupboard over beneath the entrance so that it wouldn't attract anyone's notice. As morning wore into afternoon, the heavy tread of combat boots started to be heard. Sounds of doors being slid open, of struggling bodies being dragged, of something being smashed, sounds of begging and pleading. *No-oo, our kids weren't at the demo, they've never even touched a gun.* Someone pressed the bell for Eun-sook's house, and her father's voice rang out in answer. *Our daughter's still in high school. Our sons are in middle school and primary school, what would they be doing at a demo?*

When she finally came down from the loft the next evening, her mother informed her that the corpses had been loaded into the city garbage trucks and driven off to a mass grave. Not just those that had been dumped in front of the fountain; even the unidentified bodies, the ones that had been kept in coffins in the gymnasium—all had been taken away.

The government and municipal offices had reopened, as had the schools. The shops had their shutters back up and had resumed trading. Since martial law was still in effect, no one was permitted to be out in the streets after 7 p.m. Soldiers also set up checkpoints arbitrarily throughout the day, and anyone who had come out without their ID card was hauled off to the nearest police station.

In order to make up for the class time that had been missed, the majority of schools extended their summer term into early August. Until the day when they closed for the summer holidays, Eun-sook called the Provincial Office's Public Inquiry Department every single day, from the phone booth next to the bus stop. *It's not right for the fountain to be on, for God's sake make it stop.* The handset became sticky with the sweat from her palm. The staff at the department responded patiently, assuring her that the matter would be discussed. Once, Eun-sook's call was answered by a middle-aged woman, clearly sympathetic yet sadly resigned. *I'm sorry, but you need to stop calling. There's nothing we can do about the fountain. You sound like you're still in school, no? It's best you forget, then, and concentrate on your studies.*