

DEATH IN THE DMZ



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AN ORIGINAL COLD WAR THRILLER BY UENK

DEATH IN THE DMZ

a story by UENK

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This is a work of fiction and pulp satire. Names, characters, places, and incidents are products of the author's imagination or used fictitiously for parody and social commentary. Any resemblance to actual persons, living or dead, or real events is purely coincidental.

About the Publication

Genre: Cold War Thriller

Core Theme: The ruthless monetisation of innocent human lives through a state-sanctioned international adoption pipeline, where corrupt Cold War elites secretly cooperate for profit behind a mask of political conflict.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

On 18 August 1976, the world teetered closer than ever before to the brink of a nuclear apocalypse. The incident that would go down in the history books as the Axe Murder Incident began absurdly small: a UN working group of American and South Korean military personnel entered the Demilitarised Zone to prune the branches of a poplar tree that was blocking the line of sight between two watch posts.

The Demilitarised Zone (DMZ) is a narrow, four-kilometre-wide strip of land that has split the Korean Peninsula clean in two since 1953. Although the name suggests tranquillity, it is in reality the most heavily armed and mine-ridden border in the world. In the middle of this zone lies the Joint Security Area (JSA) at Panmunjom: the only place where soldiers from North and South can stare literally eye to eye, separated by nothing more than a low concrete kerb. It is a powder keg where a single wrong move could trigger a world war.

When the UN military personnel began pruning the poplar tree that morning, North Korean soldiers rushed forward and demanded that the work be stopped. When the Americans refused, the situation escalated into a bloodbath. The North Koreans snatched the axes from the labourers and hacked at the UN officers. Two US Army captains did not survive the attack.

Within hours, the American and South Korean armies were placed on the highest state of alert. Bombers hung in the air, aircraft carriers took to the open sea, and the world held its breath for the beginning of the Third World War.

This story takes place during the forty-eight hours of this suffocating nuclear crisis. While the world's armies focused their gaze uninterruptedly on that single bloody poplar tree, a completely different, deadly backdoor opened in the absolute darkness of the border region.

PROLOGUE

The Silent Sacrifice

The 38th Parallel – The Black Sector

18 August 1976 – 10:30 am

The heat in the Demilitarised Zone that morning was not a weather forecast but a physical threat. The air vibrated above the infamous poplar tree in the Joint Security Area. The leaves stood deathly still, like witnesses holding their breath.

Five hundred metres away, Sun Young crawled through the undergrowth of a deep ditch that officially did not exist. Her fingernails were black with mud. Her breathing was a hoarse wheeze that burned in her lungs. In her arms, she clutched a bundle tightly. It was a baby wrapped in a grey blanket bearing the label K22-904. To the regime in the North, this child was a political defect. To Sun Young, it was her only chance of salvation.

In the distance, the metallic clatter of army trucks echoed near Panmunjom. She did not know that at that very moment, American axes were hacking into skulls, pushing the peninsula to the brink of a nuclear war. She only knew that the silence here in her ditch was too heavy to bear.

"Just a little longer," she whispered to the blanket. "Only another hundred metres."

The bushes ahead of her parted. Freedom that day did not wear a UN uniform, but the shape of two shadowy silhouettes. They stood motionless in the encroaching mist. The sun reflected briefly on something gold on one of the men's wrists. A cufflink engraved with a lotus flower.

Sun Young smiled; for a fraction of a second, she thought she was safe. Until the larger figure drew a weapon equipped with a silencer.

In a final, desperate surge of survival instinct, Sun Young lunged forward. She did not reach for the weapon, but grabbed blindly with her left hand at the shooter's wrist. Her fingernails tore through the fabric of his cuff, her fingers closing around the cold metal, ripping the golden cufflink from his sleeve with a brutal wrench.

Then came the dry, muffled thud.

The bullet tore a perfect red track through her forehead. She fell forward, her body a final, protective shield over the baby, while in her death throes, her right hand tightened unyieldingly around the heavy gold. Her final secret. The two shadows snatched up the folders that had rolled out of her bag, left the child behind in the mud, and vanished as if they had never been there at all.

CHAPTER 1

The Bloody Popal

Panmunjom, Border Post South Side

18 August 1976 – 2:15 pm

Hell had broken loose, and Detective Park Jin-hwan had a perfect view of it. He leaned against the bonnet of his black Hyundai Pony, just outside the perimeter of the Joint Security Area, peering through a pair of cheap binoculars. Across the road, by the disputed poplar tree, total chaos reigned. American soldiers were shouting into their radios, South Korean commandos stood with knives drawn, and paramedics were just carrying away the bodies of two American officers. Their skulls had been smashed in with their own axes. The infamous Axe Murder Incident was a reality.

Park took a deep drag from his cigarette and spat a shred of tobacco onto the gravel. He was not supposed to be here. He was a homicide detective from the gritty port city of Incheon, a man with a file full of disciplinary complaints, heavy drinking, and an unhealthy tendency to rub corrupt superiors the wrong way. His punishment detail? A temporary transfer to the border region to 'cool off'. And now he stood face to face with the beginning of the Third World War.

"Detective Park!"

Park turned around slowly. A young lieutenant from the National Police was sprinting towards him, his cap askew on his head, his face pale with fear. "You have to come with me. A body has been found. Not by the tree. Further down, in the ditch of Sector Four."

"The military are handling the bodies today, Lieutenant," Park said in his characteristic, gravelly voice. "I'm here to shelter from the sun, not to clean up the army's mess."

"It's not a soldier, Detective," the lieutenant swallowed. "It's a woman. A civilian. And she has a South Korean identity card on her. The army command wants the civil police to take this over before American intelligence steps in and calls it an espionage case. Tensions are already too high."

Park threw his cigarette butt away and crushed it with the toe of his worn leather shoe. "A dead civilian in the most heavily guarded minefield in the world, on the exact day the armies are slaughtering each other? That's no coincidence, Lieutenant. That's an execution."

He straightened his leather jacket, checked that his Smith & Wesson .38 revolver was still secure in its holster, and followed the soldier into the burning no-man's-land.

CHAPTER 2

The Child in the Mud

The Border Ditch, Sector Four

18 August 1976 – 3:00 pm

The flies had arrived first. They formed a buzzing, black blanket over Sun Young's face. Park knelt in the waterlogged mud of the ditch, the smell of iron and decomposition hitting his breath instantly. He ignored the passing army trucks in the background and examined the victim with the cold, analytical gaze of an experienced hunter.

"Single shot," Park muttered. He pointed with his ballpoint pen to the perfect round hole between her eyebrows. "Small calibre. No scorch marks, so taken from a distance, but with surgical precision. This is the work of a professional. Not a panic shot from a nervous border guard."

His gaze slid to her right hand. Her fingers were clenched into a rigid, furious fist. Between her knuckles, something hard glinted in the mud. Park leaned forward and carefully pried the object loose from her stiff grip. It was a heavy, golden cufflink engraved with the logo of a lotus flower. On the inside was a small serial number: 312.

Park looked at the cufflink and then at the tear in the dusty fabric of her sleeve. "You fought back, girl," he whispered. "You ripped this off your killer before you died." He quickly slid the cufflink into his own inside pocket.

He searched her jacket pockets and pulled out a wallet. Her identity card was clean. Kang Sun-young. Born in Seoul, thirty years old. Administrative assistant at The Lotus Foundation.

"The Lotus," Park repeated. "That massive humanitarian outfit in the capital. What is a typist from Seoul doing in the mud of the 38th parallel?"

Suddenly, he heard a sound that made the hairs on the back of his neck stand up. It was a soft, stifled cry. It was coming from beneath the woman's dead body. Park gritted his teeth, grabbed the victim's shoulder, and rolled her corpse onto its side.

In the hollow between her belly and the wet border ground lay a baby. The child was no older than a few weeks. It was covered in dried mud and the blood of its guardian angel, but it was alive. Pinned around the child's grey blanket was a plastic label with a sharp, typed code: K22-904.

Park reached forward, but before his fingers could touch the blanket, he heard the distinctive, metallic sound of a rifle being cocked right behind him. Park froze. He slowly raised his hands and looked over his shoulder.

Across the narrow border stream, barely three metres away from him, stood a man in the olive-green uniform of the North Korean People's Army. The man was large, broad-shouldered, with a face that looked as though it had been carved from the granite of the North Korean mountains. He held a Makarov pistol with both hands; the barrel aimed unswervingly at Park's chest. This was Officer Ri Kang-dae.

"Step away from the child, Southerner," Ri said. His voice was ice-cold, devoid of any emotion. "That cargo belongs to the Democratic People's Republic. If you move a single step, I'll blow your criminal capitalist head off."

Park looked at the barrel of the pistol, then at the baby, who was now crying louder, and finally into the pitch-black eyes of the North Korean. "The cargo? If this is a transport, comrade, then you've lost your delivery note. And this woman just paid for it with her life." Above ground, the air-raid sirens of the Joint Security Area suddenly wailed. The howling sound was followed by the brutal crackle of volleys from automatic rifles. The South Korean lieutenant, who was keeping watch at the top of the ditch, panicked. "Detective Park! North Korean jeeps are approaching! They're shooting at anything that moves! We have to leave now!"

Ri glanced up towards the roadside, where the shots were drawing closer. His own troops were firing warning shots to close the perimeter. There was no more time to negotiate. Park grabbed the baby, blanket and all, leapt across the border stream, and grabbed Ri by his webbing. "If we stay here, your men will shred us both to keep this secret! Run, commando!"

Ri looked at the baby in Park's arms, saw the determination in the South Korean's eyes, and nodded tightly. Together, they ran through the depths of the ditch, away from the whistling bullets, towards Park's parked Hyundai Pony.

Reaching the car, Park flung the door open. The young police lieutenant stood trembling on his feet. Park roughly shoved the baby into the young officer's arms.

"Listen to me closely, Lieutenant. You take my car. You drive straight to the provincial hospital in Paju right now. You register this baby under a false name. No Lotus, no codes. If the army top brass or intelligence ask where the child is, you know nothing. If I find out this child disappears, I will find you. Understood?"

The lieutenant swallowed, looked at the baby, then at the terrifying North Korean commando beside Park, and nodded wildly. He started the engine and roared away with screeching tyres, carrying the baby to safety.

Park watched the car go and then turned to Ri. "Right then. The child is safe. And we are officially outlaws."

Want to see how the story unfolds?

You've had a glimpse of the journey, but the real adventure is only just beginning. With twists, turns, and discoveries still to come, there is so much more to uncover within these pages.

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now.

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www.uenk-pulpworks.com



UENK PulpWorks was born from a lifelong passion for cinema and literature. Drawing inspiration from the shifting tides of global politics and the striking visual language of vintage propaganda posters, I wanted to create something unique for the modern reader. By blending these influences with today's appetite for fast-paced, punchy content, I began crafting stories under the name **UENK** (pronounced like 'dunk' without the 'D').

On our website, you will find a collection of short stories and novellas, all available through Amazon. I truly hope you enjoy reading them as much as I enjoyed bringing them to life.

This is biting satire and high-octane pulp designed to hook you from the very first page. Join the **Pulp Revolution**—we cut through the noise of fake news with real, raw storytelling.

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