

I Am Selling My Daughter for 100 Won (10¢)

*by Jang Jin-Sung*

Exhausted, in the midst of the market she stood  
"For 100 won, my daughter I sell"  
Heavy medallion of sorrow  
A cardboard around her neck she had hung  
Next to her young daughter  
Exhausted, in the midst of the market she stood

A deaf-mute mother  
She gazed down at the ground, just ignoring  
The curses the people all threw  
As they glared  
At the mother who sold  
Her motherhood, her own flesh and blood

Her tears dried up  
Though her daughter, upon learning  
Her mother would perish of a deadly disease  
Had buried her face in the mother's long skirt  
And bellowed, and cried  
But the mother stood still  
And her lips only quivered

Unable she was to give thanks to the soldier  
Who slipped a hundred won into her hand  
As he uttered  
"It is your motherhood,  
And not the daughter I'm buying"  
She took the money, and ran

A mother she was,  
And the 100 won she had taken  
She spent on a loaf of wheat bread  
Toward her daughter she ran  
As fast as she could  
And pressed the bread on the child's lips  
"Forgive me, my child"  
In the midst of the market she stood  
And she wailed.

*This is a contemporary poem written by North Korean defector and former Kim Jong-Il poet, Jang Jin-Sung. It is inspired by the desperate poverty in his home country of North Korea.*