

I'm 20, I'm north korean.

Eric Lafforgue

Miss Kim is 20. She lives in Pyongyang, North Korea's display window. She's studying English. First of her class, she was lucky enough to come with me during my 6th trip to North Korea as an assistant guide. She had never previously left Pyongyang. It was a unique opportunity for her to visit her own country and to get to meet and speak to a foreigner. She was shy at first, but became quite talkative as the days went on, and describe to me the everyday lives of young North Koreans. Without ever crossing over the Party line...

Small chats between friends who will never meet again...



-Do you know Michael Jackson?  
-I have heard of him, yes.  
-And Lady Gaga?  
-I don't know who he is, no...



-Why doesn't English or American pop music reach your country?  
-Mr Eric, because it is not what we like to listen to... But we know Mozart, Bach and Beethoven!



-Why do boys and girls not dance together?  
-They are shy, do you dance with girls that you don't know Mr.Eric?



-What is the criteria for beauty in North Korea?

-Mr Eric, a woman should have big eyes, a high nose, a small mouth and a white skin, and she should not be skinny. Women in North Korea are truly beautiful flowers.

-Do women find Kim Jong Un handsome?  
-Mr Eric, that's an outrageous question.



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조선로동당 제1비서이시며 조선민주주의인민공화국 국방위원회  
제1위원장이시며 조선인민군 최고사령관이신 경애하는 김정은동지

Kim Jong Un, First Secretary of the Workers' Party of Korea, First Chairman of the National Defence Commission of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and Supreme Commander of the Korean People's Army, standing on the rostrum to review the military parade held in celebration of the centenary of Kim Il Sung's birth.



-Nobody dyes their hair in North Korea?

-No. We need to respect the haircut regulation, we have a lot of choice!

-But don't you want to have the haircut you want?

-No, that's the last thing we're concerned about.



-Do you have any idea of the latest European fashions?

-No, Mr. Eric.

-Young people buy jeans in which there are holes.

-Holes?

-Yes, they buy worn jeans or which have been ripped.

-I don't believe you Mr. Eric, you are joking.



-Do you know the name of this character on the tshirt?  
-No Mr Eric. It's just a mouse. It's Chinese!

-Is this a computer, Mr Eric?  
-No. This is an iPad. You can listen to music,  
watch videos, and check emails.  
-Really?  
-It even has an application that allows us to see  
North Korea from above.  
-You can even see us from up high?  
-Yes we can see all of North Korea!  
-Ah, we still haven't got this one yet.





-Would you like to have a car later?  
-No, it makes people lazy.



-Do you have a computer in your home?

-Yes.

-You play computer games?

-Sure, I play « Need for speed »!



-Who is the richest person in North Korea?  
-We are all equal Mister Eric.



- What happens if a South Korean crosses the border and comes to the North?
- We welcome him.
- And if a North Korean goes to the South?
- They shoot him.

-How do you imagine life in the South?  
-I have no idea Mr Eric.





-(at the DMZ) A little smile Miss Kim!  
-i can't...  
-?  
-my heart is bleeding...



-Are soldiers heroes for you?

-No they are not. They are normal people; they serve the people, that's all.

- What happens if a woman becomes pregnant but is not married? Is the baby kept?
- That never happens
- Yes but, you never know... an accident...
- It never happens





-How is AIDS treated in North Korea?  
-We don't have AIDS here Mr.Eric.  
-Zero?  
-Zero.



-Are you a member of the People's Party?

-No Mr Eric.

-Why not?

-You don't choose to be in the Party, the Party chooses you.



-Have you danced in the Arirang show?

-yes, when i was 7, i have been chosen to play trumpet. It is a great honour.



- How do you do if you lose your Kim Jong Il and Kim Il Sung's badge?
- We don't lose it.
- Let's imagine... you put it in the washing machine with your clothes...
- It never happens.



-What is your favorite movie?

-« Sea of Blood »

-What is it about?

-It's about the mass killings perpetrated by the Japanese against our people.



-Have you ever watched an American movie?

-Yes Mr Eric, I have seen «Gladiator» at my University!

-Did you like it?

-Yes, but some scenes were embarrassing.

-Which ones?

-The scenes where you see a couple together...



- Why don't women cycle in Pyongyang?
- Because it is dangerous and it doesn't give you nice legs.
- Then why do women in the countryside all cycle?
- They don't have much of a choice in the countryside...

-Do you always lock your bike in Pyongyang?  
-Yes Mr Eric.  
-So theft happens in North Korea?  
-No, it doesn't.  
-If you lock it, there must be a reason why!  
-Your question is embarrassing. Let's carry on with the visit please.



-How old was Kim Il Sung when...  
-(Cutting me short) We don't say « Kim Il Sung »,  
that's disrespectful. We say « the Great Leader  
Kim Il Sung ».



-Who was Kim Il Sung for you?  
-...Mr Eric, I can tell you that he was the pillar of my heart.



-Why do they give plastic gloves to the people eating hamburgers in the fast food places?  
-Mr Eric, it's because we haven't gotten used to getting dirty when we eat yet.  
-Is it true that Kim Jong Il created the hamburger?  
-Yes, it is! In 2009!





-Were you there during the times of famine?

-We don't call it famine, we call it the «arduous march».

-i want to offer you a gift, what would you like?  
-Great leader Kim Jung Un would be a great gift...





-I have read on an American website that the people in the subway are actors.  
-They talk nonsense Mr Eric; I hate Americans.



-Do you remember the day Kim Jong Il died?

-Yes, Dear leader Kim Jong Il died on a Saturday, but his death was only announced on Monday.

-Why so?

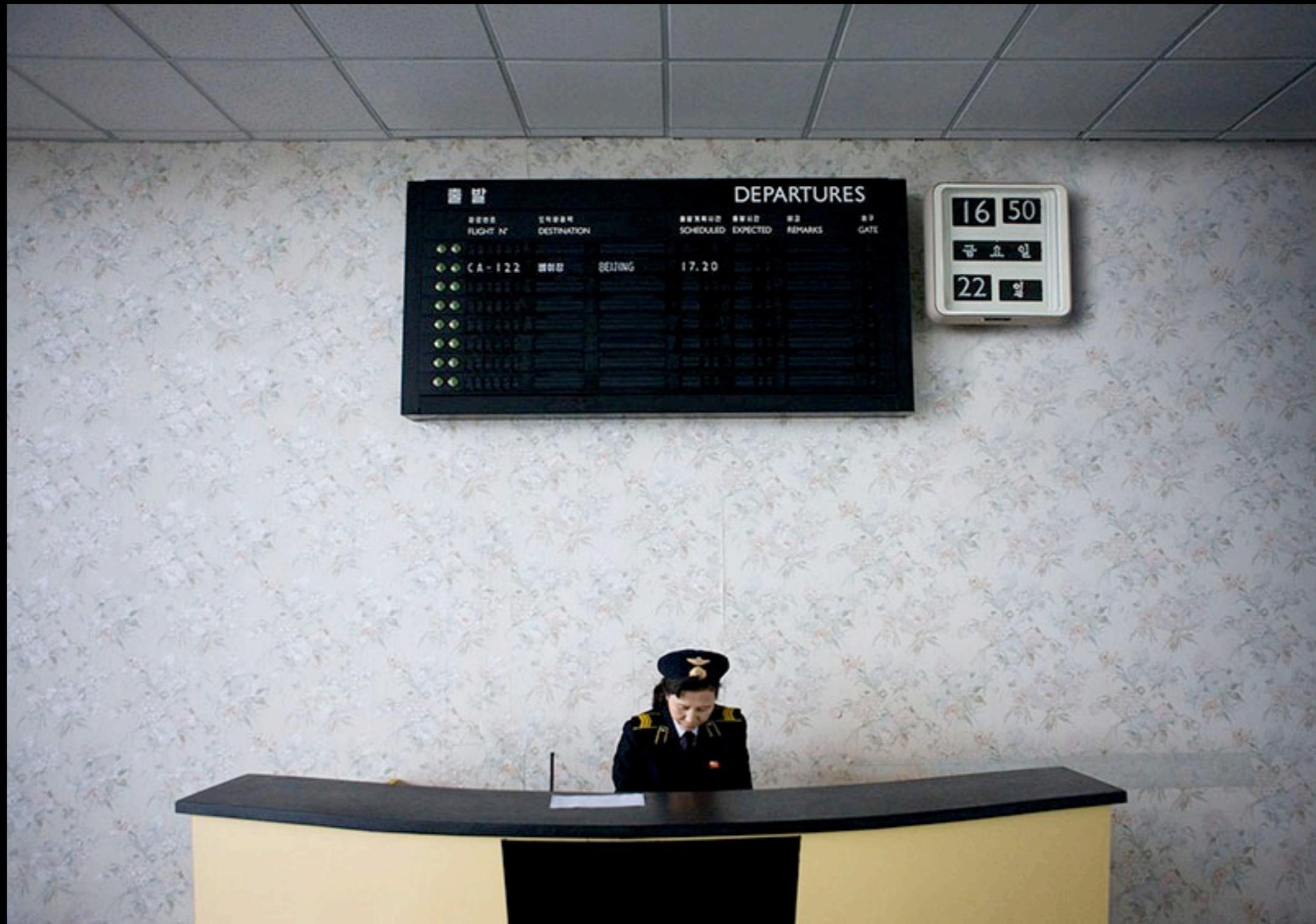
-Because he said in his last wishes that he didn't want to ruin Sunday, the people's day off.

-Do we know what Kim Jong Il was doing just before he died?  
-Our Dear Leader had just signed documents to distribute 1kg of fish per inhabitant of Pyongyang.  
-And did you receive it?  
-Of course we did Mr Eric!





-Which place do you dream to visit in Pyongyang?  
-The delphinarium! I ove dolphins!



-Would you like to visit a foreign country?  
-Yes Mr Eric I would like to visit England.  
-Why not the USA, as you speak English?  
-No, I only speak England's English.



- What is your dream for the future?
- i write it for you: *«I'll be the foreign languages master and put Chosun on the top of the world»*
- give me your mail contact, i'll send you pictures...
- i do not remember it...
- your home adress so?
- it is better not to send the pictures...