

From: **Yalu River** by Nan Gatewood Satter

Lys: mid-thirties, physically fit

LYS

I got to the river early that morning and slipped in just as a group of Chinese men did, too. I knew the border was right down the middle of the river and I knew to stay away from it. But one of the men motioned me to join the group, and pretty soon I realized we were headed straight for the other side. The North Korean side.

My heart was pumping like crazy as we approached the midpoint. And then we were beyond it, and then, way too soon, we were just yards from the far shore. There was a ramshackle hut near the riverbank, and I thought it was deserted, but ... then I saw a gun. And the gun moved.

And the group turned around and swam back. So many questions were exploding in my brain. Who would I be if I lived on the other side? And was the gun's movement threatening, or just a way to say "Hello free people. How are you this morning?" And what was the guard's life like, watching us swim while he was stuck in a hut with just a gun for company? And then I started thinking about the different kinds of huts we construct for ourselves, and the different kinds of guns we use to scare people away, and ... I haven't been the same since.