

## **WILD SWANS**

**Jung Chang**

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*Wild Swans – Three Daughters of China* is written by a contemporary Chinese woman, Jung Chang (1952), who narrates the story of a century of her ancestors (focusing mainly on the women) and their lives from feudal China through the Cultural Revolution to Post-Revolutionary China. Jung Chang's book has been translated into 25 languages and has sold over 7 million copies world-wide, reaching number 1 in over a dozen countries, including Brazil.

*Wild Swans* was originally published in hardcover by Simon & Schuster in 1991. The Anchor Books edition, was firstly published in November 1992. The Portuguese version was translated by Marcos Santarrita and was published by Companhia das Letras in 1994 for the first time. The book was originally written in English.

At the beginning of my translation I decided to try to translate as closely as possible to the Portuguese version, that is, using words similar to Portuguese words, dealing with the problematic words at the end of the job, keeping the same punctuation even though there are different rules for these two languages, and using British English.

The original book has 524 pages and the Portuguese version 485. Both books have 28 chapters and the Epilogue, the Acknowledgments, the Author's Note, the Family Tree, the Chronology, a Map and in the original version there is an Index.

I worked with Chapter 3 "Todos dizem que Manchukuo é uma terra feliz" - a vida sob os Japoneses (1938-1945), in the original version "They All Say What a Happy Place Manchukuo is" - Life under the Japanese (1938-1945).

3

"Everybody says that Manchukuo is a happy land"

Life under the Japanese

(1938-1945)

At the beginning of 1938, my mother was almost seven. She was an intelligent girl who liked to study. Her parents thought she should go to school at the beginning of the school year, immediately after the Chinese New Year.

Education was rigidly controlled by the Japanese, especially the History and the Ethics courses. Japanese, not Chinese, was the official language. After the fourth year in the elementary school, teaching was only in Japanese and most of the teachers were Japanese too.

On the 11th of September 1939, when my mother was in the second year of the elementary school, the Manchukuo emperor, Pu Yi, and his wife came to Jinzhou on an official visit. My mother was chosen to give flowers to the empress on her arrival. A vast crowd stood on a decorated dais happily, all of them holding yellow flags, the colours of Manchukuo. My mother was given a huge bouquet of flowers and she

was confident as she stood by the band and a group of important people in morning suits. Next to her, there was a boy of her age with a bouquet of flowers to offer to Pu Yi. As the real couple appeared, the band started playing the Manchukuo national anthem. All of them suddenly stood up. My mother stepped forward and bowed, skillfully balancing her bouquet. The empress was wearing a white dress and fine long gloves up to her elbows. My mother thought she was extremely beautiful. She managed to glance at Pu Yi, who was wearing a military uniform. She thought looking through his thick glasses, he had "pig-like eyes".

Besides being a star pupil, one reason my mother was chosen to offer flowers to the empress was that she always filled in her nationality on enrollment forms as "Manchu", like Dr. Xia, and Manchukuo was supposed to be the Manchus' independent state. Pu Yi was very useful to the Japanese because most of people thought they were still under the Manchu emperor. Dr. Xia considered himself a loyal subject and my mother agreed. Traditionally, an important way in which a woman showed her love to her husband was by agreeing with him in everything, and this happened naturally with my grandmother. She was so happy with Dr. Xia that she did not want to think about disagreement at all.

At school they taught my mother that her country was Manchukuo and there were two Chinese republics. Among the neighbouring countries - one hostile, led by Chang Kai-Chek; the other friendly, led by Wang Jing-Wei (Japan's puppet governor of part of China). They didn't teach her any concept of a "China" in which Manchuria was part.

The pupils were taught to be obedient subjects of Manchukuo. One of the first songs my mother learned was:

Red boys and green girls walk in the streets  
Everybody says that Manchukuo is a happy land

You are happy, I am happy  
Everybody lives peacefully and works joyfully without worries.

The teachers said that Manchukuo was a paradise on earth. But even at her age, my mother could see that paradise was only for the Japanese. Japanese children attended different schools, which were well-equipped and well heated, with shining floors and clean windows. The schools for the local children were in ruined temples and houses falling apart donated by private supporters. There was no heating. In the winter, all the students had to run around the fields in the middle of a class or stamp their feet collectively to get rid of the cold.

Not only were the teachers in their majority Japanese but they also used Japanese methods, hitting children was usual. The small mistake or a failure to comply with the regulations and etiquette, such as a girl with her hair one centimetre below the earlobes, was punished with slaps. Girls and boys were slapped on the face, hard, and boys were often hit on their heads with a thick wooden stick. Another punishment was having to kneel in the snow for hours.

When the local children passed a Japanese child in a street, they had to bow and give way, even if the Japanese was younger than the Chinese. Japanese children would stop local children in the streets and slap them without any reason. The students had to bow respectfully before their teachers every time they came across them. My mother played with her friends saying that a Japanese teacher passing by was like a strong wind flogging the bushes – we saw the bushes bending as the wind blew.

Many adults also bowed before the Japanese afraid of offending them, but the Japanese presence did not bother the Xias at first. The posts of the middle and low echelons were taken up by the local people, Manchu and Han Chinese, like my grandfather who kept the post as a police

subchief of Yixian. In 1940, there were about 15,000 Japanese in Jinzhou. The people living in the house next to the Xias were Japanese and my grandmother was a friend of theirs. The husband was a government official. Every morning the wife stood at the gate with their 3 sons and bowed deeply before him when he got in the rickshaw to go to work. Then, she would start her own job, kneading coal powder into balls for fuel. My grandmother and my mother never understood why she always wore white gloves, which got filthy in the blink of an eye.

The Japanese woman always visited my grandmother. She was lonely because of the fact that her husband was never home. She would bring some sake and my grandmother would cook some snacks like soy-pickled vegetables. My grandmother spoke some Japanese and the Japanese woman a little Chinese. They hummed songs to each other and shed tears together when they became emotional. They often helped each other in their respective gardens. The Japanese neighbour had practical gardening tools which my grandmother admired greatly and my mother was invited to amuse herself in her garden.

But the Xias could not avoid learning what the Japanese were doing. In the large expanses of the North of Manchuria villages were being burned and the survivors kept like cattle in "strategic places"... More than 5 million people, about a sixth of the population, lost their homes and tens of thousands died. Labourers were worked to death in the mines under the Japanese guards and the production was exported to Japan - because Manchuria was particularly rich in natural resources. Many of them were deprived of salt and due to that they did not have the strength to run away.

Dr. Xia had argued for a long time that the emperor did not know anything about the evil things being done to the Chinese because he was a virtual prisoner of the Japanese. But when Pu Yi changed the way of referring to Japan, from "our friendly neighbour country" to "the eldest

brother country", and eventually "father country", Dr. Xia knocked the table and called the emperor as "that vain coward". Even though he said he did not know how much responsibility the emperor should have for the atrocities until two traumatic events changed the Xias' world.

One day at the end of 1941 Dr. Xia was at his office when a man whom he hadn't seen before came into the room. He wore rags and had his raw bony body almost folded double. The man explained that he was a railway coolie and he had been having agonizing stomach pains. He worked carrying heavy loads from morning to evening, 365 days a year. He didn't know what to do but if he lost his job he would not be able to support his wife and newborn baby.

Dr. Xia told him that his stomach could not digest the rough food he had to eat. On first of June 1939, the government announced that from now on rice was reserved for the Japanese and a small number of collaborators. Most of the local population had to subsist on a diet of acorns and sorghum, which were difficult to digest. Dr. Xia gave him some medicine for free, and asked my mother for a small sack of rice which she had bought illegally on the black market.

Not long after, Dr. Xia heard that the man had died in a forced labour camp. After leaving the office, he had eaten the rice, gone back to work and then vomited in the railway yard. A Japanese guard had seen rice in his vomit and he had been gaoled as "economic criminal" and taken to the camp. He survived only a few days in his weak state. When his wife heard what had happened she drowned herself with their baby.

The incident made Dr. Xia and my grandmother upset. They felt responsible for the man's death. Many times Dr. Xia said: "Rice can kill as well as feed! A small sack of rice, three lives!" After that he started calling Pu Yi "the tyrant".

Shortly after that, tragedy struck near their home. Dr. Xia's youngest son was working as a teacher in Yixian. Like every school in Manchukuo, there was a large portrait of Pu Yi in the office of the Japanese headmaster, which everyone had to bow when they came into the room. One day Dr. Xia's son forgot to bow before Pu Yi. The headmaster shouted at him in order to make him bow at once and gave him such a hard slap on his face that he fell down. Dr. Xia's son was furious: "Do I have to bend all day long? Can't I be stood upright even for a minute? I have just complied with my duties in the morning meeting..." The headmaster slapped him again and barked: "This is your emperor! You Manchus need to learn elementary etiquette!" Dr. Xia's son shouted back: "Big deal! It's only a piece of paper!" At that moment, two other local teachers passed by and managed to stop him from saying anything more incriminating. He recovered his self-control and forced him to bend in front of the portrait.

That night, a friend went to his house and informed him he was been taken as a "thought criminal" - a crime punished by arrest and possibly death. He ran away and his family never again heard a word of him. Probably he was caught and died in gaol, or perhaps in a labour camp. Dr. Xia never recovered from this which made him an enemy of Manchukuo and of Pu Yi.

It was not the end of the story. Due to his brother's "crime", local gangsters began to harass De-gui, Dr. Xia's only survivor son, charging protection money and saying he had not done his job well as the elder brother. He paid them, but the gangsters asked for more. He eventually sold the medicine shop and left Yaxian for Mukden, where he opened a new shop.

At that time, Dr. Xia was becoming more successful. He treated Japanese as well local people. Sometimes after treating a high Japanese

officer or a collaborator he would say "I wish I were dead", but personal views never affected his professional behaviour. "A patient is a human being", he would say. "It's the only thing a doctor should think about. He should not mind what kind of a person he is."

In the meantime, my grandmother had brought her mother from Jinzhou. When my grandmother left home to marry Dr. Xia, her mother had been left alone in her house with her husband, who despised her, and the two Mongolian concubines, who hated her. She began to suspect that the concubines wanted to poison her and her small son Yu-lin. She always used silver chopsticks, as the Chinese believe that silver will get black in contact with poison and she never touched the food nor her son before she had tested it out on her dog. One day, a few months after my grandmother had left home, the dog dropped dead. For the first time in her life, my great-grandmother had a big row with her husband; and with her mother-in-law's support, Mrs. Yang, she moved with Yu-lin to a rented house. Old Mrs. Yang was so disgusted with her son that she decided to leave the house too and she never saw her son again - only on her deathbed.

In the first three years, Mr. Yang reluctantly sent them a monthly allowance, but at the beginning of 1939 he stopped doing that and Dr. Xia and my mother had to support them. At that time there was no pension or a proper legal system, so a wife was entirely at the mercy of her husband. When old Mrs. Yang died in 1942, my great-grandmother and Yu-lin moved to Jinzhou in Dr. Xia's house. She considered herself and her son to be second-class citizens, since she lived on charity. She spent her time washing the family's clothes and obsessively clearing up, nervously obsequious to her daughter and Dr. Xia. She was a Buddhist and everyday she asked Buddha in her prayers not to reincarnate her as a woman. "Turn me into a dog or cat, but not in a woman", was a constant murmur while she crept around the house, transpiring apologies in each step.

My grandmother had also brought her sister, Lan, who she loved greatly, to Jinzhou. Lan had married a man in Yixian who revealed that he was a homosexual. He had offered her to a rich uncle, for whom he worked and who was the owner of a large vegetable oil factory. The uncle had raped several women in the family, including his granddaughter. Because he was the head of the family, having immense power over all its members, Lan did not dare resist him. But when her husband offered her to his uncle's partner, she refused. My grandmother had to pay the husband to buy her freedom (xiu), as women were not allowed to ask for a divorce. My grandmother brought her to Jinzhou, where she married again, a man called Pei-o.

Pei-o was a guard in the prison, and the couple often visited my grandmother. Pei-o's stories made my grandmother's hair stand on end. The prison was crowded with political prisoners. Pei-o often said that they were brave and they cursed the Japanese even when they were being tortured. Torture was well established and the prisoners did not receive any medical treatment. Their wounds were left to rot.

Dr. Xia offered to treat the prisoners. On one of his first visits he was introduced by Pei-o to a friend of his called Dong, a hangman who operated the garrote. The prisoner was tied to a chair with a rope around his neck. The rope was slowly tightened. Death was extremely slow and painful.

Dr. Xia knew from his brother-in-law that Dong had a conscience and whenever he had to garrote somebody he had to get drunk before. Dr. Xia invited Dong to his house and suggested that perhaps he could avoid tightening the rope to the end. Dong answered he would see what he could do. There was usually a Japanese officer or a loyal collaborator present, but when the victim was not important enough, the Japanese did not bother to show up. At other times, they would leave before the

prisoner was really dead. On such occasions, Dong hinted, he could stop the garrotte before the prisoner was dead.

After the prisoners were garrotted, their corpses were put in flimsy wooden coffins and taken on a wagon to a piece of deserted land on the outskirts called South Hill, where the corpses were thrown into a shallow grave. The place was infested with wild dogs that lived on the corpses. Newborn girls who had been killed by their families, very usual at that time, were also thrown into the grave.

Dr. Xia started a relationship with the old cart driver and gave him money from time to time. Sometimes, the cart driver would go to his office and start to talk about life, in an apparently incoherent way, but eventually he would start talking about the cemetery: "I told the dead souls that it was not my fault they had ended up there. I told them, that for my part, I wished them well. 'Come back for your anniversary next year dead souls. But in the meantime, if you wish to fly to look for better bodies to reincarnate, go in the direction they are looking at. That's a good way for you.'" Dong and the cart driver never talked to each other about what they were doing and Dr. Xia never knew how many people they had saved. After the war, the rescued "corpses" got together and raised money for Dong to buy a house and a piece of land. The cart driver had died.

One man whose life they helped to save was my grandmother's distant cousin called Han-chen, who had been an important figure in the resistance movement. Because Jinzhou was the main railway junction north of the Great Wall, it became a concentration point for the Japanese to attack China proper, which started in July 1937. Security was extremely tight, and Han-chen's organization was infiltrated by a spy, and the whole group was arrested. They were all tortured. First they were forced to drink water and pepper through their noses; then, they were slapped on their

faces with a shoe with sharp nails sticking out of the sole. Then most of them were executed. For a long time the Xias thought Han-chen was dead, until one day Pei-o told them he was still alive - but he was going to be executed. Dr. Xia contacted Dong immediately.

The night of the execution, Dr. Xia and my grandmother went to South Hill with a carriage. They parked behind a group of trees and waited. They could hear the wild dogs rummaging around the grave from which rose the repugnant smell of decomposing flesh. Eventually the cart arrived. In the darkness, they could vaguely see the old driver climbing down and throwing some corpses from the coffins. They waited for him to go away and went to the grave. After touching the corpses they found Han-chen but they could not tell whether he was alive or dead. At last, they realized he was still breathing. He had been so brutally tortured he could not walk, and they had trouble to carry him to the cart and drive him back home.

They hid him in a tiny room in the innermost corner of the house. The only door led to my mother's room, to which the only other access was from her parents' bedroom. Nobody would enter that room by chance. As the house was the only one which there was direct access from the yard, Han-chen could exercise there in safety, as long as somebody was on watch.

There was the danger of a police raid or the local district committees. At the beginning of the occupation the Japanese had tightened a system of district control. They named the most important people as heads of the units and these district bosses collected taxes and kept a 24 hour watch for "outlaw elements". It was an institutionalized gangsterism, in which "protection" and informing were the keys of power. The Japanese also offered large rewards to informers. The Manchukuo police were less of a threat than ordinary civilians. In fact, many of the

police were quite anti-Japanese. One of the main tasks was to check people's documents, and they used to search from house-to-house. But they would announce their arrival by shouting out "Checking documents! Checking documents!", so that everyone who wanted to hide had a lot of time. Every time Han-chen or my grandmother heard this shout she would hide him in a pile of dried sorghum stacked in the room for fuel. The police would enter the house, sit down and take a cup of tea, apologizing to my grandmother: "This all is only formality, you know..."

At the time my mother was 11. Although their parents did not tell her anything, she knew she should not say that Han-chen was at home. She had learned to be discreet since childhood.

Slowly, my grandmother treated him and after three months he was well enough to go away. It was an emotional farewell. "Elder sister and elder brother-in-law", he said, "I will not forget that I owe you my life. As soon as I have the chance, I will pay my great debt to you both." Three years later, he came back and was as good as his word.

As part of their education, my mother and her classmates had to watch movies advertising Japan's progress in the war. Far from being ashamed of their brutality, the Japanese exhibited it as a way of inculcating fear. The film showed Japanese soldiers cutting people in half and prisoners tied to posts being shattered by dogs. The Japanese watched the eleven and twelve-year-old girls to make sure they did not shut their eyes or try to put a handkerchief in their mouths to prevent them from screaming. As a result, my mother had nightmares for several years.

In 1942, with their army spread all over China, southeast of Asia and the Pacific Ocean, the Japanese realized they were short of manual labour. My mother's whole class was recruited to work in a textile factory as well as the Japanese children. Local girls had to walk 6 kilometres each way day after day; the Japanese children went by truck. The local

children ate weak gruel from moldy maize with dead insects floating in it; the Japanese girls ate packed meals with meat, vegetables and fruit.

The Japanese girls had easy jobs like cleaning windows. But the local ones had to operate complex spinning wheels which were highly demanding and dangerous even for adults. Their main task was to bind broken threads while the reels were running fast. If they did not find the broken thread, they were brutally beaten by the Japanese foreman.

The girls were terrified. The combination of nervousness, cold, hunger and tiredness drove them having many accidents. More than half of my mother's classmates suffered injuries. One day she saw a shuttle spin out of a machine and take out the eye of the girl beside her. All the way to the hospital, the Japanese supervisor screamed at the girl for not being careful.

After the period in the factory, my mother moved up to High School. Times had been changing since my grandmother's youth and girls were not confined between 4 walls. It was socially acceptable for women to go to High School. However, boys and girls had different education. For girls, the aim was to turn them into "gracious wives and good mothers", as we could read in the motto of school. They learned what the Japanese called "the womanly way" - taking care of the house, cooking and sewing, the tea ceremony, flower arrangement, embroidery, drawing and the appreciation of art. The most important thing was how to please their husbands. It included to know how to dress, to do their hair, to bow and above all how to obey without arguing. As my grandmother would say, my mother seemed to have "rebellious bones" and she didn't learn any of these skills, not even cooking.

Some tests were rather practical tasks, such as making a specific dish or arranging flowers. The examining board was made up of local authorities, Japanese and Chinese, and besides evaluating the tests they

also evaluated the girls. Photographs of them wearing beautiful aprons which they had designed were put on the board with their homework. The Japanese authorities often chose fiancées among the girls, as marriage between Japanese men and local girls was encouraged. Some girls were also selected to go to Japan to marry men they had not met. Very often the girls - or even their families - were willing. At the end of the occupation, my mother's friend was chosen to go to Japan, but she missed the ship and was still in Jinzhou when the Japanese surrendered. My mother looked at her suspiciously.

In contrast with the Chinese Mandarins who preceded the Japanese and despised physical activities, the Japanese were keen on sports, which my mother loved. She had recovered from her hip problem and she was a good runner. Once she was chosen to run in an important race. She trained for several weeks and was well prepared for the great day, but a few days before the coach, who was a Chinese, called her apart and asked her to not win. He told her he could not explain why. My mother did understand. She knew the Japanese did not like to be beaten by the Chinese. There was another local girl in the race and the coach asked my mother to give her the same advice, but not to say it came from him. On the day of the race, my mother did not even finish among the first six. Her friends noticed she did not even try. But the other girl could not hold herself and finished first.

The Japanese soon took their revenge. Every morning there was a meeting chaired by the headmaster who was known as "Donkey", because his name when read in Chinese (mao-li), sounded like the word for donkey (mao-lü). He would bark orders hoarsely, gutturally, for the four bows to the four designed points. First: "Distant worship of the imperial capital!" in the direction of Tokyo. After: "Distant worship of the national capital", in the direction of Hsinking, the capital of Manchukuo.

Next: "Devoted worship of the Celestial Emperor!" - the emperor of Japan.  
Finally: "Devoted worship of Imperial Portrait!" - this time for Pu Yi's portrait.  
After this came a slight bow to the teachers.

In this particular morning, after the bowing was concluded, the girl who had won the race the day before was suddenly dragged away of her row by "Donkey", who claimed that her bow to Pu Yi had been less than 90 degrees. He slapped and kicked her and announced she would be expelled. It was a catastrophe for her and her family.

Her parents married her to an inferior government official in a hurry. After the defeat of Japan, her husband was called a collaborator and because of that the only job she could get was in a chemical plant. There was no pollution control and when my mother went back to Jinzhou in 1984 and met her, she was almost blind due to the chemical products. She looked at the ironies of her life in a twisted way; having beaten the Japanese in a race, she ended being treated as a collaborator. Even though, she said she didn't regret winning the race.

It was difficult for people in Manchukuo to have much idea of what was happening in the rest of the world or of how Japan was going in the war. The fight was too far away, news was severely censored, and the radio did not broadcast anything but propaganda. But they felt that Japan was not going well in the war because of several signs, especially the food shortages.

The first real news came in the summer of 1943, when the newspaper informed that one of Japan's allies, Italy, had surrendered. By the middle of 1944, some Japanese employees in the service of the Government Departments in Manchukuo were being recruited. Then on 29 July 1944, American B-29 airplanes appeared in the sky over Jinzhou for the first time, but they did not bomb the city. The Japanese ordered every householder to dig air-raid shelters and there was an air-raid drill every day at school. Once a girl from my mother's

class picked up a fire extinguisher and squirted it at a Japanese teacher who she particularly hated. Previously, this would have provoked a harsh punishment, but now it did not bring anything. The tide was turning.

There was a prolonged campaign to catch flies and rats. The students had to cut the rats' tail, put them in envelopes and give them to the police. The flies had to be put in bottles. The police counted each rat tail and each dead fly. One day, in 1944 when my mother handed the bottle full to the top of flies, the Manchukuo policeman said: "It's not enough for a meal." When he saw the surprised expression on her face, he said: Don't you know? The Japanese like dead flies. They fry them and eat them! My mother could see in the cynical shine of his eyes that he did not think the Japanese to be so terrible.

My mother was excited and expectant, but during the autumn of 1944 a dark cloud had appeared: her house did not seem as happy as before. She felt there was discord between her parents.

The fifteenth night of the eighth moon of the Chinese year was the Mid-Autumn Festival, the festival of family union. On that night, my grandmother would place a table with melons, round cakes and round loaves of bread outside in the moonlight, in accordance with the custom. The reason why this date was the festival of family union is that the Chinese word for "union" (yuan) is the same for "round" or "intact"; the full autumn moon was supposed to look especially, splendidly round at this time. All food eaten on that day had to be round too.

In that silky moonlight, my grandmother would tell my mother stories about the moon: its largest shadow was a huge cassia tree which a certain lord, Wu Gang, spent his life trying to cut down. But the tree was enchanted and he was doomed to repeated failure. My mother would stare up to the sky and listen, fascinated. She thought the moon was mesmerizingly beautiful, but on that night she could not describe it,

because my grandmother had forbidden her to say the word "round", as Dr. Xia's family had been destroyed. Dr. Xia seemed downhearted the whole day and for several days before and after the party. My grandmother would even lose her gift of telling stories.

On the night of the festival in 1944, my grandmother and my mother were sitting under a pergola covered with winter melons and beans, gazing through the gaps in the foliage to the cloudless sky. My mother began to say: "The moon is particularly round tonight", but my grandmother interrupted her at once and then suddenly burst into tears. She dashed into the house and my mother heard her sobbing and crying: "Go back to your son and grandchildren! Leave me with my daughter and get your way!" Then, in gasps between sobs, she said: "Was it my fault - or yours - that your son committed suicide? Why should we have to carry the burden year after year? It is not me who impede you to see your sons. It's they who have refused to come and see you..." Since they had left Yixian, only De-gui, Dr. Xia's second son, had visited them. My mother did not hear a sound from Dr. Xia.

From then on, my mother felt there was something wrong. Dr. Xia became taciturn day after day and she instinctively avoided him. Some times my grandmother would cry and murmur to herself that she and Dr. Xia could never be completely happy, with the heavy price they had paid for their love. She would hold my mother tightly and tell her that she was the only treasure in her life.

My mother was in an usual melancholy mood when winter started in Jinzhou. Even the appearance of a second flight of American B-29 planes in the clear, cold December sky could raise her spirits.

The Japanese were becoming more and more tense. Once one of my mother's classmates got a book by a forbidden Chinese author. Looking for a calm place to read, she went to the countryside, where she found a cave which she thought was an empty air-raid shelter. Touching

the place in the dark, she found what seemed to be a light switch. A penetrating noise was heard. What she had touched was an alarm. She had found a weapon warehouse. Her legs turned to jelly. She tried to run, but walked only two hundred metres before the Japanese soldiers caught her and took her away.

Two days after, the whole school was driven to a barren, snow-covered land across from the west gate in a curve of the Xiaoling River. Dwellers had also been invited to go there by the district inspectors. The children were told that they were to witness "the punishment of an evil person who disobeys The Great Japan". Suddenly, my mother saw her friend being dragged by Japanese guards, to a place right in front of her. The girl was in chains and could hardly walk. She had been tortured and her face was so swollen that my mother could barely recognize her. The Japanese soldiers lifted their rifles and pointed them at the girl, who seemed to try to say something, but no sound came out. It was heard a crack of bullets, and the girl's body collapsed, and her blood began to drip on the snow. "Donkey", the Japanese headmaster, was scanning the rows of his students. With a tremendous effort, my mother tried to hide her emotions. She forced herself to look at her friend's body, which by now lay in a bright red spot on the white snow and ordered herself to be courageous and never forget what the Japanese had done.

She heard somebody trying to hold the sobs. It was Miss Tanaka, a young Japanese woman teacher whom she liked. In an instant "Donkey" was on Miss Tanaka, slapping and kicking her. She fell on the floor and tried to roll away from his boots, but he kept on kicking her fiercely. He screamed that she had betrayed the Japanese race. "Donkey" eventually stopped, looked at the students and barked the order to march. My mother had a last look at the twisted body of her teacher and the corpse of her friend and forced herself to contain hold her hatred.