

**Moonlight in Summer – The Story of a Girl Who Disappeared  
During the War**

月光の夏 — 戦火に消えた一人の乙女の物語 —

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Early in the morning on July 4<sup>th</sup> 1945, my father had been called into duty, so, as the eldest son, I was desperately trying to put the fires out in house we lived in but it was no use. I jumped into the Sako River and looked up at the world around me. Smoke was rising up from burning ruins on one side. There were many dead bodies. It was a world of death. The sun, which when it rose was very large, was visibly different from the rising suns I had seen in the fifteen years of my life. It was like the burning heart of a blast furnace.

Under that strange sun I waited for news of my elder sister who should have fled to the mountains with my younger siblings. Eventually I heard that she had been admitted to Suzue Hospital, seriously injured. My mother and I rushed to see her (although we had to walk there). My sister was in a critical condition, a bomb had penetrated her thigh. My father was an army surgeon busy providing first aid, when he saw my sister that night the colour ran from his face. Although she needed surgery immediately there

was no anaesthetic or tetanus serum and her wounds were covered in mud. “Anyhow, I will go and look for the serum...” my father said, his facial expression when he returned later that night suggested his search had failed. Tetanus serum was extremely valuable and could not be used without permission of the surgeon general, it was out of the question, it was for use on military personnel and such chemicals would not be given to a novice surgeon with one month’s experience. We only had a little saline solution – my beloved sister was effectively condemned to death.

Eventually my sister passed away. On that day, my mother had notice her lips moving and moved in closer. “Mum, Dad, I am glad I was born as your child” those were her last words. As my mother was rubbing my unconscious sister’s cheeks she noticed her fingers were moving to the tune of Beethoven’s “Moonlight Sonata”.<sup>1</sup> She was a sixteen year old youth, she also enjoyed the masterpieces of Osaka Women’s Medical Faculty but these memories disappeared together. My sister was cremated in a floral *yukata* (a casual summer kimono), her hair was decorated with a comb we had picked from the ruins, the white flowers she held had been weeds picked from the street, the coffin was made from a cart (*riyaka*) that had lost its wheels, I had caught a cold so my mother was there alone. It was a sad funeral. On the day I could not leave the house, my father

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<sup>1</sup> The title of this account refers to Beethoven’s “Moonlight Sonata”.

said to me “How can we win this war? We do not have tetanus serum or anaesthetics, how can we take care of our troops at the front? Why sacrifice more troops in a war we are expecting to lose? We should demobilise.” my father showed compassion for his men. My sister had been desperately defending my brothers when she was fatally injured, now she sleeps in the same place as my father and they are together in death. My sister had been laid to rest wearing just a *yukata*. If my sister had been able to finish medical school she would have had the chance to wear a ceremonial kimono, she was not even given that opportunity when she was killed in the air raid. Her world was lost. My mother and I believe that she is still in the distant clouds playing Beethoven’s “Moonlight Sonata”.