

The Ruptured Tear
Behind the Mask
Nanjing 1937-2004

The Ruptured Tear
Behind the Mask
Nanjing 1937-2004

Mariska Stevens

This is a work of fiction. Historical events inspire it and serve as a metaphor for human behavior. However, the names, characters, and persons in this book are entirely fictional. Any resemblance to actual persons, living or dead, is purely coincidental.

This book uses the official Hanyu Pinyin romanization of mainland China for Chinese names, places, and terms. Names for individuals list the family name first and the personal name second. The exception is the name for Chiang Kai-shek and the Kuomintang party, as in this case, many international readers recognize the Wade-Giles spelling more easily. Japanese names use familiar Western romanization. English, according to the American style and spelling. Phonetic accents are not applied.

Schrijver: Mariska Stevens

Coverontwerp: Mariska Stevens oil on canvase 100x120

ISBN: JMBS3000000033230

© 2025 mariska stevens

Inhoud

<i>Poem: The Ghost of Culture</i>	5
面具后焦灼的泪水	6
2004, Nagasaki: Unzen National Park.....	7
2004, Nanjing, China: The Burning Song.....	15
2004 Nanjing: The Sunflower Institute.....	20
2004 Nanjing, Inspector Wu Feng.....	32
Suma's humiliation and Oota.....	41
1937, Nanjing, Late June, Early August, Fuzimiao.....	48
Nanjing 1937, The Sacrificial Lamb.....	60
Nanjing 1937: Reality meets Denial.....	65
December 19, 1937, Nanjing: Terror on the Wall.....	74
1937: Ishi Gunjiro, The Hours to Nanjing.....	80
1937, Nanjing, The Boys Under Suma.....	88
Nanjing 2004: Brothers in Yakuza.....	95
Nanjing 2004: A Meeting on Bilateral Crimes	104
Xiao Yu and Zhang Wei meet	114
Nanjing 1937, December 15, Hell Creek.....	119
2004, Nanjing, The Old Master	126
2004, Nagasaki, Gunjiro's Decision.....	136
2004, Nagasaki: Confrontation on Hashimoto Island.....	145
2004: Revelations at the Nanjing Memorial.....	153
2004, Nanjing: Identifying a Psychopath.....	167
2004 Nanjing, Shock, Reflection and Overconfidence	177
2004: Nanjing, Peizhi's Discovery.....	183
Oota Hiro Creates Suspicion.....	192

<i>1948, Nagasaki: The Message</i>	197
<i>2004, Nanjing: The Spirits of the Monastery</i>	204
<i>2004, Nanjing: The Tower from Hell</i>	214
<i>2004, Nanjing: Wen Xiao Yu's Terror on the Wall</i>	224
<i>2004, Oota's Apotheosis at Unzen Hell, Nagasaki</i>	234
<i>List of characters</i>	237
<i>Historical timeline</i>	238

Poem: The Ghost of Culture

*I saw the ghost of culture
in the mirror
It seemed far away
And full of my love
It approached
A crack in the mirror
Made it disappear
In agony
And a century after century
The ghosts appeared
And with them, the agony
Kept returning
A dark heart
Full of scorched tears
Tears scrape their skin
Along the walls of the nation
Tears split apart
In sorrow shared
Tears are concealed
Behind guilty masks
Tears are torn apart
Discolored by time*

面具后焦灼的泪水

我在镜子里看到了文化的鬼

好像很远

满满是我的爱

它走近了

镜子里的裂缝

让他消失

在痛苦中

一个世纪又一个世纪

鬼出现了

痛苦附在它们身上

不断的回来

一颗阴暗的心

满是焦灼的泪水

泪水刮伤他们的皮肤

流过民族的墙

泪水爆裂

在悲伤中分享

眼泪被隐藏

在罪恶面具的背后

泪水被撕开

因时间而变色

2004, Nagasaki: Unzen National Park

Unzen National Park was a strange place with spiritual history. At one time, Unzen was the scene of a massive earthquake and, presumably, housed the spirits of Japanese Christian martyrs killed during the Edo period. Its name, Unzen Hell, was inspired by the Buddhist tradition as a place where people are punished after death and increased through the gasses erupting from the hot springs. Its commercial appearance housed popular tourist attractions. The park was dominated by Unzen city, with hot volcanic springs for wellness, lakes, a hotel, and a designated nature route through the hillside area along the many hot springs. Abundant parking places would lead to beautiful forest views, memorial stones, stone paths, and wooden walkways. However, tourists were warned not to stray from the walkways marked by low wooden fences. The park was much more extensive than the designated areas; the public could not penetrate large parts.

This was his retreat. The gate towards his secret holy place was hidden between the volcanic springs. Tourists would not be able to find it. Park rangers never came this far, and if they did, all they would see was a Shinto gate, implying it was resurrected out of respect for the woods as a holy area. Only purified Shinto priests were allowed to enter through the gate. Tourists were primarily interested in hot water springs. The local population focused on servicing tourists; they had already seen too much of the park.

Haruyoshi Suma found the Unzen-hell the perfect place for his rituals. Here he contemplated and ... planned his private hell. He would walk around half-naked, dressed in his ritual Hakama, tight around his waist, with wide trouser legs. He was a bony older man now, but his age, in his mind, contributed to his masculinity. He had grown a long white goatee beard, which he cherished by frequently moving his palms down around it to convince himself that it was still there, his masculinity. His eyelids drooped, but he felt this contributed to

his mystic facial expression. The corners of his mouth had lowered simultaneously with his eyelids, yet he felt like a weakness, and many times, he stretched his mouth in a wide grimace, like a cat-eyed predator, ready to attack. His eyebrows had not changed; the right pointed upwards in the middle, and the left fell towards the bridge of his nose. Around his skull, he wore a ritual band, the one they wore in the early days, his thin hair was covered by a black cap, making him appear younger, or so he imagined.

The hot springs steamed up every road and every entrée in the area. The steam created a mystical atmosphere, and the mountainous area made walking outside the paths almost impossible. He had to climb towards his retreat, which was harsh and uneasy at his age.

Yet, once there, he had all the privacy he wanted. He had made the trip preparing his retreat many times, using a backpack to transport the necessary items. Once, a spiritual man-size mirror; another time, his ritual sword, which he buried, just in case someone would enter the forest temple. The smell of sulfur, combined with the historical local horror stories of adultery and murder and the gruesome sounds of the steam from erupting springs, created tension. On the far horizon, one could see the lights of the hotels, and although a grim reminder of urban life, they also added to the area's imaginary mystique.

The temple had little comfort, mostly stone, yet some overhanging trees brought the necessary shade as otherwise, the summer heat would be unbearable. In wintertime, it could be freezing and unbearably cold as well. He considered the weather conditions a personal challenge. He had created an overnight sleeping shag, which would protect him from rain, and somewhat from the heat and cold. Paths he discovered allowed him to enter and leave the park undetected.

He loved his night rituals most of all. He would favor himself in front of the mirror in the evening light and undress his upper body, waving his katana sword in a movement that, in turn, encircled either side of his body. He heaved the katana with two hands high above the head, then took it in his right hand

and then zoof circle right backward, zoof circle left forward in a perfect s-shape, and then repeated the movement. How did it feel in the past? How masterly did it feel all those years ago? How powerful, the memory still filled him with the same sense of erotic masculinity he experienced in his youth. It was a barren fantasy, of course, but the waves of the sword enforced the imagination, and through the ritual, he could relive his actions from those years.

Japan was changing, and he did not like it. He feared for his well-made and imagined plans. And now, he was forced to move forward against his better judgment. He had given himself a new family name to escape his identification. It was a double life, not very honorable. Yet the mysterious ritual he performed in Unzen-hell gave him enormous satisfaction and self-admiration, a narcissistic trait that had served him well all his life.

He was convinced he could build a society with a powerful grip on its citizens and follow religious precepts based on his beliefs or, more prominent, his political ambitions. His position within the newly founded society would be as a priest or, better, an emperor. His secret domain in Unzen hell was small, of course, but no one, he imagined, could discover his secret plans that way, and though it seemed too contradictory, he was convinced his empire would grow. He hid the mirror in the woods and the rustproof steel box containing his memorabilia from Nanjing, which reminded him of the task and goals he set for himself.

Suma also took pleasure in his plan to admonish young people from the Yakuza and encourage them to leave their "passive lives" of consumerism behind for heroism while recruiting them into his own violent 'secret' society. Nothing would benefit his plans more than violence nourished carefully by heroism. And he promised his disciples the accomplishments of fame through heroic deeds in the future.

It was not the first time he used an almost religious ideology to compose a sectarian identity. He did it before in 1937 while training young Japanese

soldiers in China, and many times after those days perfected his method. Yet he found that nowadays recruitment was more difficult. The Yakuza bosses were more potent than the Japanese nationalists. They were the future oligarchs, making ideology more difficult to impose.

As for irony, in late 1945, nobody in his unit expected him to escape punishment and death for his crimes, and as if by some miracle, he had slipped through the cracks of the justice system of the Tokyo trials. Notably, though he despised the Chinese Buddhist monasteries, those places and covers protected him from the tribunals. Depending on the situation, it wasn't hard to switch from Chinese to Japanese descent; it was easy to go undercover. And he had become a master in masquerading as a wandering Chinese priest, gradually moving back to Japan undetected.

Even though there was no honor in it, then again, submitting to something like the Tokyo trials, he felt, would have been heroically pointless. He and everyone else would plead not guilty anyway. Most so-called "war criminals" kept silent or testified that war crimes were part of the war and, indeed, not their responsibility. Most 'supposed' criminal cases seemed poorly documented based on oral testimonies from supposed victims. And in the end, very few cases were recognized. Hardly the issues in China that seemed valuable to persecuting were recognized by the Tokyo tribunal.

In case they caught him, his story was well prepared. Yes, he had been there in Nanjing but had done nothing, given no orders, but had looked at his subordinates, and they had misinterpreted his intentions. But he wasn't caught.

That stupid general Iwane Matsui was punished for the Nanjing massacre. That sickly little man had been unable to stand on his feet during the advance on Nanjing. And even wept during the victory celebration dinner over the lost lives of the Chinese civilians! When Suma covertly undermined the command from Matsui, he knew exactly what he was doing. In the end, Prince Asaka, who mainly took charge of the Nanjing attack, would never be

implemented for his determining role in the massacre. After all, he was a member of the royal family, the brother of Emperor Hirohito. Matsui was hanged instead, and it was quick and clean.

Suma knew that after severely training the soldiers in his regiment, an order from his mouth and a stare from his eyes would suffice to continue the killing spree. "Put nothing on paper so that nothing could be traced" was his device. You straightened your back, felt the knob of your sword that felt so good, and then nodded at your subordinate, just once, hinting up, not even down. He considered himself a brilliant planner in his complicated rape, kill, plunder, and burn strategy.

The orders about Nanjing had been given far in advance. Nothing was to be left behind, nothing was to remain, and above all, resistance had to be broken in every possible way. Everything was allowed. After his field promotion to platoon officer, he dominated the kill method. It was his ultimate revenge against the past Meiji government. Even though he failed to revolutionize his revenge at home, the Nanking assignment ensured he could vent his anger. With each execution, he thought, 'yes, this is how it should have been at home; this is how Japan should have been wiped clean.

He was proud to obtain a Koseki (identity) document, his Japanese registration, through which he had repatriated in 1946. It had proven to be childishly simple. The Bureau of Repatriate Welfare had to relocate six million Japanese military personnel and citizens from the East Asian area. They also needed to bring home the bones of soldiers who died in action. He only had to find a soldier who could be dated back one or two generations and, more importantly, one whose parents were dead. He found one among the subordinates under his command. A fine specimen whose bones could be returned with the many bones of others under a different name. He adopted the name Haruyoshi. It was a common family name, but he kept Suma, his personal birth name. And the guy whose bones he used? Unfortunately left on one of the many battlefields without any identifying papers. The Japanese

bureau was happy to believe it, as their repatriation actions had to be completed by 1948. It resulted in chaos, the only demanded precondition for which he thanked General McArthur, the American fool after the United States imposed martial law on Japan.

Now, in 2004, maybe his plan could be accomplished after all! Democratic ruling? The word made him puke. There was a time when democracy implied showing physical strength in getting what you wanted, albeit some hundred years ago. Back then, Japanese politicians exalted fitness, practicing saber, sword, and judo techniques, and would rough up parliamentary discussions with their fists if necessary.

Back then, politicians would call upon their opponents, staring them down with their eyes as wild samurais from the past, calling out; You there! You must be ..., I am...! And they could raise at least some hundred ruffians to support their claims. Some politicians even trained their private army of a couple of hundred ruffians. Even payment was eminent within these supporters' groups alongside the type of violence applied.

The ruffians would muscle an opposition member and spy during political meetings. Payment increased with the opponent's status and, of course, rose through the industrial consorts, the zaibatsu, who could buy political power this way. Smacking the face, the hands, or the feet would determine the additional payment amount. It was how the warrior aggregated in the violence of the Yakuza and was simply an excellent way of doing politics and business. And the Yakuza protected their assigners as well. They served and protected, one could say.

One famous Yakuza boss even made it into parliament then. Yoshida Isokichi was elected, and he was a legend; they called him a 'silent golden buddha'! As a young boy, he admired the man who once pushed a member of parliament off the podium floor, which almost ended in a street fight outside the building. On another occasion, the opponent was 'eliminated' by a gang member in a heroic way, stabbing the opponent in the hearth.

Yosjida's story showed Suma that violence, power, and politics were inseparably connected, and he dreamed of obtaining such a status. He never even thought about the human aspects. In Suma's mind, violence and humanity were the same thing. He entered the Japanese royal army professionally, aiming to experience killing as sanctified. Today, everything in Japan was mushy talk, and he couldn't wait to enforce changes. And it was his great ambition to have such an army of his own. He dreamed and fantasized about it every night.

Feelings? The only emotion he frequently experienced was a remote fear of exposure which was increased by a fear of humiliation. Though he had convinced himself it was not a natural feeling, it frequently surfaced as a frightening nightmare.

Therefore, to protect his plans, the threat of his identification had to be removed quickly, and two persons needed to be eliminated. Those two people could identify him! The general expectation was that Japan and China might partly reconcile soon; therefore, there was no time to lose. The urgency became evident by a news item on Japanese television conveying a documentary from NBC about Nanjing. In 2004, the city hosted the first UNESCO World Historical and Cultural Cities Expo. In NBC's special news item about the Nanjing Memorial, an old Chinese Tai Ji master told his story of his childhood hardships in Nanjing. He talked about one of Suma's murders in a chance encounter during the child's flight from the city. When asked if he could remember this war criminal, he answered: "Oh yes, absolutely, I will never forget him. He disappeared after the war without being identified as dead, and however old he must be, somehow I will always recognize him again if he is still alive." Suma learned from the interview that this master had one daughter who had become a visually impaired masseuse at the Sunflower Institute in Nanjing. They should be easy to find, and Suma was unwilling to take risks. With his current political ambitions, any harmful exposure could destroy his plans.

And so, he employed one of his trusted disciples to find out more and, if necessary, he would hire a killer and send him to Nanjing. There was one other imminent threat, one other person in Japan, who knew of his actions and might have proof of it as well, here in Nagasaki, but he had kept quiet. Up so far...

He continued his ritual; it was bloody, cruel, and without mercy, making it clean and simple.

2004, Nanjīng, Chína: The Burning Song

Mr. Fuji cleaned his shirt and brushed off his pants. He washed his hands and combed his dark hair. It was thin, and he needed to paste it to his skull to keep it in place and top it off with brilliantine. He had cultivated a small mustache that pointed to the left and the right and up at both sides. Mr. Fuji considered himself a “multi-purpose” person, a true renaissance man, and was proud of it. He frequently traveled between China and Japan. There always was a business he could accomplish, a project of some kind, be it real estate, banking, finance, and nefarious activities, which he kept hidden in Japan and China. For these purposes, as mentioned above, Mr. Fuji had various passports.

Mr. Fuji was proud of being Japanese, though he did not usually express it, again, not in China. At one time, he stayed in a hotel in Japan where they kept a history book in the guestrooms denying the Nanjing massacre. When it came out that the hotel promoted the Nanjing massacre as a fabrication, all opinionated public hell broke loose in China. The hotel chain did not just make these claims, but they also sold the book. The defensive reply from the hotel explained that there were no photographs, documents, or films about the massacre, and it was all invented by the Kuomintang publicity department.

Mr. Fuji, ever since then, kept tight-lit on his words while in China. He put black tape over the logo on his Nikon camera. But he would freely express his nationalistic feelings among those he believed to be his peers. And he would frequently go beyond merely expressing his thoughts. His passports also covered many different nationalities; in that sense, he was not nationalistic. Mr. Fuji liked the convenience. He had a vast network of contacts and was not afraid to enforce his power. And Mr. Fuji had many unique techniques to do so.

In that sense, Mr. Fuji had a peculiar character: both a coward and a brave person. He felt he had a mission in life that provided him with both idealism and money, an excellent combination to feel simultaneously bold without considering bravery. Whatever he missed, he could always buy or enforce it any other way. And so he went to the Sunflower Institute with the intent to have some excitement. On an earlier visit, he had checked the existence of cameras in the rooms, but there weren't any. He was well prepared, nothing could go wrong, and he felt sexually aroused by the thought of his prospective experience.

The room was painted in soft green colors, and the blinds on the windows were half-closed. A small streak of sunlight still covered the massage table. It was a relief to be able to relax. No one would recognize his face here; all the masseuses were blind. He surprised himself again, noticing how easy it was to assume another identity and behave differently. Not that it made much difference, as nobody asked for his identity card. In China, public places, such as internet cafes, were obliged to ask for identification, but very few other locations had bothered. In this place, he did not have to hide behind anything.

Japanese businessmen highly recommended the institute. Just yesterday, he enjoyed a wild night with the three of them, despite the fierce discussions at the end, but such was alcohol. All discussions about Japan and nationalism were fierce when intoxicated. He made his request quite clear at the reception without being specific. The girl at the desk seemed to understand; she was a bit nervous. The other men were in the rooms next to his. It was explained to him, 'Ask for a massage with all extras included focused on total physical satisfaction. If this were as satisfying as his experience in Japan, he would be happy to pay some extra. He crawled under the sheet. It felt cool on his bareback.

As he laid down on his stomach, he secretly waited, a little tense, for what was to come, and he wondered if the masseuses would act alone or in pairs. He preferred them to be alone; it would be more intimate in the end and

would give him more control over the situation. He snickered at the thought that they usually were very strict about enforcing the rules. A strict mistress, he imagined, chuckling. In his capacity to enforce power, he felt that being dominated would relieve his tension much more effectively.

Soft tapping sounded from afar, like ladies' heels on the pavement, but somewhat heavier. He knew their type of shoes needed to be more adjusted to their impairment. If you are blind, you do not want to trip over your high heels. She must be alone, he thought with relief. Gently the door opened. "You ren ma." He heard her ask. Her voice sounded darker than a female's, as if she had a cold. "Dui," he replied. Her hands felt strong as they touched his spine and started trembling when they reached his lower regions and bare bottom. He observed her making a high-pitched, little squeamish noise as if she was startled by something, and he concluded she would act out some erotic scheme. Then nothing more, all went silent... and for some minutes, all kept quiet. For a moment there, it seemed she had left the room.

Following, he felt her soft touch on his back. "Oh, how cleverly she does that, ' he thought," if this is not an invitation, I don't know what is. ' He groaned involuntarily, curious about her choice of treatment. He heard the clink of glass on glass and her carefully groping as she placed the glasses for the cupping therapy one by one. He smelled the spicy scent of the specially prepared cotton wool. And heard her turn on the burner. Today, she obviously would work with cupping therapy, he guessed.

His admiration grew for the powerful way these Chinese women dealt with their visual impairment. As if it didn't exist. She stroked his back, covered his naked body with a sheet, then grabbed the hem just above his neck, pulling it down patiently, piece by piece, touching his skin with every action. The sheet remained still just above his tailbone. A feeling of disappointment absorbed him. She intended to stick to the rules, though she lubricated him with oil.

Then suddenly, he felt her groping fingers on his head very gently. Her fingers massaged his scalp and fumbled through his forehead over his

eyelids, which she gently pushed down. She placed his head on the designated hole of the massage table so he could relax the neck and shoulder muscles. He closed his eyes in complete surrender. Obviously, she wanted to be on equal footing with him. She pulled at his arms to lay upwards and massaged his hands and fingers. She wrapped his hands with a warm steamed towel and gently placed them over his head. It caused his hands to relax while she tightly wrapped them in the towel. She firmly and quickly massaged the back of his legs, his ankles, and his feet. And she also wrapped his feet in a warm moist towel, a little too tight, he felt, but he guessed it was part of what came next. For a moment, he was surprised; she did his back first, but then he felt how she climbed on top of him and, with her knees, lightly pressed into his loins.

She turned the burner higher. Presumably, she wanted to turn it off but was mistaken about the direction of rotation. He felt the mattress move slightly, and suddenly her nails probe hard into his back... He threw his head back in a cry of pain but felt her put a wad of cotton wool in his mouth in the same movement, placed a silk scarf over his open mouth, wrapped it around his head, and tied it at the back. He began to struggle and felt that he could not free his hands his feet from the towels. The next moment his back came on fire. Not from the massage! Really on fire. He smelled the oil on fire while she poured more ignited oil all over him and his head. He tried to open his eyes, but the oil stung his eyes; for a moment, he saw a glimpse of her, but it was not her! 'Who is this ?!' He still struggled aimlessly.

And then, he felt only flames; worse yet, choking on his fear, he felt each drop of oil like slow torture. Whoever it was, took the time to make him feel the pain. Very softly, he heard a voice of a man whisper, singing a Japanese song:

*If you genuinely are a samurai
Then your body will remain on the battlefield
And your bones will burn there
If you genuinely are a samurai
You will not fear anything*

Terrified, he was astonished; his supposed famous last words contained a disappointing lack of significance; "A national anthem?" Far away, he heard the others scream: "Get out; if you cannot face the front, take the back door! Take the backdoor! Take the backdoor!" All turned black as breathing fire burned him from the inside, his final excruciating moment of life.

2004 Nanjing: The Sunflower Institute

The year 2004 marked a new chapter for Nanjing. China was opening up, and Nanjing had become the city to host the first UNESCO World Historical and Cultural Cities Expo. Nanjing celebrated the official listing on the UNESCO World Heritage List as an ancient capital highlighting the Imperial Ming Tombs. The city received international attention because the mayors of eleven global cities visited during the exhibition. A Japanese newspaper interviewed Chinese citizens and aimed to tell the story of Nanjing's history during the Second World War. Even though the newspaper did not choose to side with China, it at least had Chinese survivors express their experiences.

Yet, then the Japanese newspaper later printed these experiences with photos of the survivors and combined them with interviews of Japanese journalists reporting in 1937. Unfortunately, these Japanese 'old hands' completely denied the Nanjing massacre in their stories, claiming they only saw the dead bodies of Chinese soldiers and no more than a hundred. As a young boy, Wen Ting was one of the Chinese survivors who initially gave an interview and was angered by this denial. It became somewhat of a relief to find that NBC television gave him another interview and broadcasted it counteracting the Japanese news item. Wen Ting had no idea that this interview would set an entire chain of events in motion. For him and his family, it would make the year 2004 more than solely Nanjing's historical and cultural landmark.

Another cultural landmark in Nanjing related closer to the events of 1937. This was the center of Nanjing's cheering population called Fuzimiao. The Fuzimiao complex was reconstructed after world war two. During the Japanese occupation in 1937, it was almost destroyed. The temple of Confucius, or rather the memorial, now stood proudly as a monument to

Nanjing's resurrection after the war. It breathed respect for the Chinese past with all its ferocious shifts. The memorial implied a return to the original Chinese culture, yet not entirely uncontaminated by modest commercialism and a magnet for pleasure. One could buy tickets, incense for offerings, and an impressive memorial stone that listed Confucius' teachings in Chinese characters at its entrance. Inside, one could strike a sizeable sacred bell and knock a large drum. A significant announcement told all that its sounds could bring you happiness and luck. Strike the bell three times, pay three yuan, knock the drum three times, and pay three yuan. The first sound means you would remain safe; the second sound implied success. But you would be rich if you did it all together nine times!

Although the memorial indicated philosophical wisdom, the complex construction around the area formed a mishmash of all kinds of activities. Besides eateries, trinkets, souvenir shops, and expensive ludicrous restaurants, one could suddenly stumble upon a not-always-fresh-looking tattoo studio with a rancid barber's chair that left little to the imagination. An illuminating name above the shop's door read: "dream tattoo house"; the shop was little more than two by two meters.

Wen Xiaoyu had been blind since birth. Her name Xiaoyu came from the weather on the day she was born, meaning "little rain". She was slim, with long hair, which she cherished daily as an asset to her well-being. Its soft silky texture reminded her of beauty in a visual world, even though she would never be able to see it. Her parents were not well off, and fortunately, she still had been able to find work. Now, nearing late thirty years old, she felt that her life was stable, as far as it could be. Her blindness made her equally vulnerable as invulnerable. For most of her life, she had been unable to find work, limiting her to living on her parent's income. Then ten years ago, a man she considered a "miracle doctor" had devised a job solution for blind people and had put this solution into practice. He had figured out that being visually

impaired was not a disability but offered an ability sighted people did not have. And from there, he began to work with blind people, creating An-Mo masseurs training for blind persons. The profession was not yet fully recognized, although there were already 100,000 blind masseurs working in China. China's Association of Blind Practicing Masseurs has existed since 1997, just as the training projects began. She was fortunate to enter employment early. There were around 17 million visually impaired persons in China, and finding work was still challenging. They were either masseurs or fortunetellers. And the blind fortunetellers could hardly make a sustainable living.

Her father, Wen Ting, was a Tai Ji master with a considerable reputation; therefore, her knowledge of the human body was already significant before entering the An-Mo training. She was also able to perform Ta Ji practices despite her blindness. From an early age, her father had trained her in balance. Now she had obtained a leading position at the Sunflower Institute under the direction of Doctor Wang, a doctor with an Md., which gave the institute a professional status. It ensured that hidden erotic pleasures were not allowed, though occasional whispers existed.

She was used to touching people. Touching was the only way to get to know people, smelling and listening too, but when you've been blind all your life, you have no images of the world. Touching persons could help you construct and discern their shape, though there was always the odd moment at first, and of course, many people did not like to be touched. Yet, she had practiced employing touch for a long time, with flowers, trees, objects, with the faces of people close to her and with people's consent a little further away. Her specialty was feeling impressions from hands. By shaking someone's hand, you could observe almost everything about a person, firm or weak personality, affective or cold, decisive or doubtful, open to people or closed, interested or superficial, dominant or respectful, yes, that as well.

You could also detect their emotion from their tone of voice, soft, brutal, ruthless, yes, that too, angry, happy, she was rarely wrong. Most

people were quite capable of keeping their face in the fold, but rarely could they control their tone of voice. As the tone of one's voice is something people are unaware of, they neither control it. She was attracted to voices that were low, not too high, and not too agitated, but her preference was for people who knew how to speak with many variations. That made them enjoyable to listen to.

Her parents were not very well off, although they were very successful. She was sure that her father, Wen Ting, loved her, but he was one of what is called "the walking wounded". Sometimes she thought he was ashamed because he had fathered a blind child, though he loved her dearly in his heart. Her parents had married each other because the Communist Party found them a suitable match. Her mother was more successful than her father. And more dominant... she repeatedly won competitions and was even listed as a model laborer. This was not easy for her father; many a time, he disappeared into his wife's shadow and also away from home if he could.

Her father was a victim of the Japanese rape of Nanjing in 1937. Xiaoyu did not know what happened back then as he did not talk about it to her. When she asked about it, he would respond, "Not for your ears; you have enough to hear without listening to such burdens." She loved him for his sensitivity but wanted to understand his occasional affectionate distance. She could feel he struggled to express affection to her and her mother. Some of his nervous twitches would come out despite his silence. For instance, he had a hard time sitting still, and while doing nothing, like just waiting, he would wiggle his lower leg impatient, sometimes even ferociously, in their company. When she asked what the matter was, he would answer with empty significance: "Nothing to do...."

To close the emotional gap, she read history books in braille at the Nanjing Library's room for the visually impaired and talked to people. What she found made her understand her father's strange moods and frightened her. She became aware of the vulnerability of dependency. Her father taught