



Story of a Comfort Girl

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In 1991, a Council for Korean Comfort Women's issues was formed to record the testimony of survivors of the Japanese Labor Service Corps, a branch of the Japanese military charged with setting up brothels to serve its troops during WWII. To populate these "comfort stations," as they were euphemistically called, the Japanese army drafted or tricked around two-hundred thousand girls, most from rural Korea, into coming to work in military "factories." Instead, they were forced into sexual slavery.

After the war, the surviving comfort women, gripped with a crushing sense of shame, rarely if ever spoke about their ordeals. As a result, their suffering has barely been acknowledged in the history books. Realizing that the survivors were dying off, the Council was formed to record their accounts before it was too late; before Japanese revisionists erased these unfortunate events from the history books forever.

"Story of a Comfort Girl" is the moving first-person account of one such survivor.

Story of a Comfort Girl Details

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Maggie says

This is a novelization of interviews which were done with a few of the many thousands of comfort women Japan impressed to servicing their soldiers during World War II. These unfortunate young girls were made to suffer unimaginable horrors every single day and those who survived had nowhere to go after the war. Their own families would not accept them as they were damaged goods and the U.S. was too busy buddying up to the Japanese to seek any kind of reparations for them. Further, I expect there was little understanding of how the girls were collected and used. How terrible for them that they were raped by both countries.

Juliemae says

Incredible. It's amazing anyone could live through a horror like this and come out the other end with their sanity intact. I had never heard of comfort girls before, and now that I have I will never forget. The Japanese have a history of horrendous war crimes during this period that they, and the U.S., have tried sweeping under the rug. The only thing worse than what happened in this story would be for this story to have never been written.

M.K. Kildor says

Some, lived.

A poignant survivor story of a young girl tricked into serving as a comfort girl to enemy soldiers. An apology doesn't mean much after what this survivor went through. The author notes compensation of \$18,000 was offered to the women. Many refused it, others suffering from culture shame did not come forward. The survivor was never to know a normal love relationship with a man, marriage nor could she bear children. Some comfort women were taken from their children. Pregnancies during service were terminated. If a woman had too many pregnancies she was killed.

Many comfort girls were as young as 12. Educated or not, none prepared for the horrors that awaited them. Some were sold into service by a father, step-mother, aunt or husband. They were expected to serve 15 to 20 soldiers a night. They were looked down on, regarded as nothing more than a piece of flesh, a box of sorts, and treated with contempt and brutality. The survivor notes, would the officers and soldiers want their own sisters treated that way?

Most comfort girls died in service. As a result of severe mental, emotional and physical abuse by the officers or soldiers. Their reproductive systems destroyed by disease and battering. Hearing distorted by an endless stream of verbal battering.

Not able to process their experiences they carried disgust and shame. Until they could come to a new perspective; that it wasn't their fault. Young country girls were lured by non-existent factory jobs and the prospect of making money for their families during wartime. They were told by their captors, "it was your choice." Yet, who doesn't want to make money for their families during dire times of war? Most, however,

were kidnapped into service, often torn from their mother's arms.

Their stories have taken a long time to come to light. As much as 70 years, according to my personal research, as late as 1991. They were 10 years old and up, many chosen because they were pretty, some very beautiful. The prettier they were the worse they were beaten by the soldiers and officers.

Some, lived to tell their stories. Albeit a difficult existence of suppressed trauma, poverty and social rejection

Parita says

I started reading this book just wanting to flip through something for some time, but just couldn't unhook myself from it thereafter, probably because I knew that it holds an element of truth within it. This is yet another story of war crime and human suffering. And yet it is more about keep going on against all odds to triumph ultimately. Yes, it's depressing and it may linger on in your minds for some time, but then having told that this was just why the book was written, I must say that Rudick does a good job here. Worth a read...for years, these girls didn't exist. Now, we at least owe them a read.

Jay Howard says

This is a work of fiction, but it is based on historical fact. Certain details are self-evidently incorrect - it speaks of Japanese government denials, of no apologies, no compensation, when they have actually made full apology and the survivors were financially compensated for their enforced sexual slavery. That said, it gives the history of these women a human face that we can relate to. There are varying estimates of the numbers of women involved. It is difficult to be accurate when so many documents were destroyed and the women involved were too ashamed to come forward. Consensus is roughly 200,000, some prepubescent, all of them young. Most of them never managed to live a normal life afterwards: they were scarred mentally and physically. Their story must not be forgotten, it must never happen again.

In this story Ji In-Sil's testimony speaks for the brave Koreans, and women of other nations, who were diabolically tricked. For me their ordeal is unimaginable. This story helps me understand. These young girls were tricked into leaving their poor villages for the offer of earning a fair wage in a Japanese factory. They thought they would be able to help their families. Instead they were forced to become sex slaves. At a time when it was unthinkable for a Korean to have sex before marriage, the shock would be more than most women could bear. I am full of admiration for Roger Rudick. He has somehow not only imagined himself into the mind of a woman, but a woman in a situation I cannot conceive of surviving. But many of these women did survive and lived the rest of their lives trying to cope with the knowledge of what was done to them.

This is a very moving account of one young girl experiencing this terrible ordeal. She is so strong in spirit that somehow she not only endures nightly rapes, typically as many as 30 soldiers each and every night, but retains her sanity and determination to resist. She remembers her father's instruction to 'remember who you are'. Defiance would be rewarded with death, so her resistance had to be subtle. Keril took an alternative route: suicide. Seyong divorced her mind from reality. Chipping told In-Sil she should envy Seyong as 'her spirit is no longer with us, only her body'.

In-Sil's testimony is written in a simple style. There is no sensationalisation or inflation of fact. Through it we get to know her, and admire her, and through her the real women who were forced to live this life. She went through hell and still had empathy, not only for her fellow sufferers, but even for her torturers. This is what she was thinking when she and her friend, Jungyun, had run away from the comfort station and were facing death when they were caught, which they thought was inevitable:

I was sure Jungyun had come to the same conclusion. We could both enjoy the comfort of knowing all was lost and no decision could change that now. Yet, as strange as it seems, we knew we still had to try. For trying, even when it was hopeless, was in itself a form of freedom. There was nothing left, after all, that the Japanese could take from us, except our lives. I wondered if perhaps that was how we made the Japanese feel when they raped us. Part of it, I realized, was the base animalistic pleasure of having sex. But there was definitely something else for them. When all is lost, there is no longer anything to worry about losing. For the Japanese, after raping us, there was no longer any virtue to lose. That too, I suppose, must carry a strange sort of comfort.

Rudick uses In-Sil's relationship with Lieutenant Kohei Yanai to explore some of the philosophical issues relating to war, to man's cruelty to man - and women - and the futility of it all. The Japanese soldiers' training had desensitised them to cruelty in all forms.

And so it would remain forever, until the weapons became so great that there were no longer any soldiers left to fight, nor any women to make more soldiers.... I could not hate the Japanese. Instead, I pitied us all.

It's a shame that there are some formatting issues and some typos, and the incorrect details mentioned earlier, but the story is so well written I cannot give it less than 5*. It is amazingly well told and makes it easy for us to understand, to acknowledge the history of these women, their suffering and their courage in the face of adversity.

Jen says

A story of a comfort girl who was tricked into the horrible and desperate situation of becoming a 'comfort girl' for Japanese soldiers during WWII and how she endured despite all odds. The book left me horrified, sorrowful and angry. The brutality these women suffered followed by the denial from the Japanese government is deplorable. The author does a wonderful job personalizing this tragedy that happened to thousands of women during WWII. Some survived. Some thrived. Many did not. I think this book will stay with me for a long time. Read it.

Woden1809 says

Surprisingly given the subject matter, I found Rudick's exploration of humanity the most moving aspect of this book. There are few humane moments - it begins with the brutality of Japanese occupation on mainland Korea and the effect this has on every layer of society and ends with the utter devastation of war-to-the-death. However, I was moved, and challenged by the characters in the book and their amorality, and what that says about us as humans.

As the young girl's life takes its horrific path, it is hard to believe the depths the Japanese, and often fellow Koreans, go to to serve themselves and those in power. The book's success is in its handling these issues, The

main character, Ji In-sil, often tackles these issues, wondering if such apparent "evil" is inherent within all men. It is the hope that it is not, mostly through the beacon of her father and then a kindly lieutenant.that keeps her going. Such hope is a recurring theme in the book.

The book is riveting from start to finish and will leave the reader asking many questions around free will, the role of the individual and the nation, and, of course, the horrific abuse of women in both peace and wartime.

Peggy Hess Greenawalt says

This novel is only available as an e-book. but it was excellent. Wish it would be published in printed form. The subject is difficult, but it grabs you from start to finish.

Lauren Marrero says

I wish I could give this novel 5 stars, but there were too many grammatical errors. I hope the author revises this and releases an updated version soon. This novel is too good for those kinds of mistakes.

This novel literally kept me awake for hours. I could not put it down. Roger Rudick expertly blends history and fiction to create a novel that will have you pondering human nature and man's strange ability to inflict the most horrendous cruelty on man.

The lieutenant's kindness and strength provide an excellent contrast to the horrors of war and provide a welcome break from a very heavy subject. I am romantic enough to wish a happy ending for In Sil and the lieutenant, but this was not a love story, rather it is a tale of overcoming obstacles both temporal and corporal in order to survive. It is about the human spirit and learning to live each day, finding kindness and strength wherever it may be.

Becky says

Little known piece of history

I had never heard of comfort women til my sister recommended another book and then I had to read more. What these women were forced to endure is beyond the imagination and to know that when they overcame cultural shame and stigmas they were told it never happened. It sickens me and I want Japan to do the honorable thing and apologize and compensate these women. But what price do you out on someone's soul? What is appropriate for thousands of rapes perpetrated on one victim? How can men be so barbaric?

Marie Durkin Malinosky says

It's difficult to give such a horrific book five stars but the rating is based on the necessity to hear the truth

I am devastated that I didn't learn about the abuse suffered by comfort women before this book. I am humbled by the courage they have shown in overcoming the cultural taboo and telling their story. All blessings should surround them and all the Gods and Goddesses hold them close.

KayG says

This is an fictional account of a comfort woman - developed from interviews of actual comfort women. It is brief, informative, and heartbreaking.

Jeri says

In a little known part of the atrocities of WW II were the comfort girls that the Japanese sent to their troops ...some 200,000, many from rural Korea. This is the story of one survivor..there were very few told in 1991 to the council for Korean comfort girls to be sure their story would be told...it's truly a tragic story but shows the strength some have just to survive....it made me cry but I'm also a better person from having read this poignant tale.

Kathryn O'Halloran says

I left this book unread on my kindle for quite a while after buying because I knew it would be a hard story to read but, once I started, I felt the author had done an amazing job. He conveys the horrific experiences these women faced without going into gratuitous detail that would have made their story into a freak show. Instead he handles it with a great deal of sensitivity because the facts alone are horrific enough.

Larry says

One of the most excellent and riveting books I have ever read.
