

TATTOO

Characters

Lian - Alto

(An old granny in the age of late 80s or early 90s)

Lian - Soprano

(A teenage girl)

Shuying - Soprano

(A well-educated young student)

Rishim - Baritone

(A volunteer helping those female victims of the war)

Madman - Tenor

(A survivor who has PTSD)

Choir SATB

(Acting on the stage)

Children (if available)

(2 children acting on the stage)

ACT I.

(It's a beautiful dawn, a granny sitting in front of her own yard, some children are playing beside her and asking her for interesting stories.)

Scene 1

Children: One more story, please!

Tell us a story, when you were little.

Lian (old): When I was little.....

When I was little,
there was a brooklet in front of the village,
children liked to play in it,
women liked to wash clothes in it.

When I was little,
I liked to play hide-and-seek with friends in the small mountain,
I was invisible,
they could never find me.

When I was little,
I liked Autumns the most,
when all the fields were ripe,
people were busy with the harvest,
and there was an Autumn I received my favorite red coat.....

Choir: In Autumn, we ran and played in the field.

In Autumn, we played and laughed at the mountains.

Lian (old): And there was an Autumn, the uninvited guests came quietly.....

Scene 2

Choir: There were so many of them!

They wore the same uniform,
spoke a language we did not understand,
went throughout the clear brooklet,
trampled the golden field, came into our homeland.

They were just like the locust storms.

There was nothing left when they passed by.

They burned, everything.

They burned, everything.

The village head led us to hide in the mountains.

We tried our best to run and hide, but they found us easily.

They ordered us to offer our food.

If we refused, they would kill us.

We trusted them innocently,

Just did want to live.

Lian (old): Then, they saw me!

They wanted to take me away!

My mother and little brother fought against them.

They were so many of them.

They pushed my mother easily,
ground my little brother beneath their heels.

They found a rock, and tied my mother to it,
they pushed her into the brooklet that she used to wash clothes,
just in front of me.

I was screaming, but nobody seemed to hear.
Mama was crying,
but all of them seemed as if they were watching a clown,
and they laughed with such hate.

There was nothing I could do,
There were so many of them.....

(Lian is locked in a dark room, the door suddenly closed means something horrible is going to happen)

ACT II.

Scene 3

Lian:

Stars, you are still shining.

You witness everything,

You are as bright and peaceful as ever, stars.

Have you seen my new scars?

They said they need our help to do some medical affair,

In the dark rooms not far away,

Villagers never went out after entering.

They said they would help us to achieve equality for all,

but they never stop whipping us.

Did we hear it wrong?

Or is this a lie at all ?

All I see is the clear stream is gone ,

The mountains are covered with sun flags.

They destructively changed everything here ,

The things that I love, Including myself.....

Am I the one I used to be?

But you still shine like their bayonets.

You witness everything,

you can't see my bleeding heart.

Scene 4

Choir:

Tenor and Bass:

The wheelbarrow is packed full, again,

Like yesterday, like every day.

It is a lovely day ,

Good to do something pleasant.

Bad luck to be sent to do this laborious work,

Hurry up to finish it, to get back to the cozy bed.

Soprano and Alto:

They are not covered with anything, but stacked together in layers,
face to the ground, cannot know who they are.

No one knows where they are going to be sent,

There is no way to know how they will be dealt with.

They are already dead, who would care?

Lian: It's fine to die, you won't feel pain anymore.

Shuying(soprano):

Don't! Don't say that, don't even think like that!

There will be a day,
All of this will be ended,
We will regain the freedom that has been absent for too long.

When the smoke of the war will dissipate.
The sky will turn blue,
The river will be clear,
And the mountains will be covered with flowers.

We could start all over again,
To live,
To see this world,
This beautiful world!
And I want to go back to school,
wearing my pretty uniform.....

Piercing bell ringing.

Choir: (Soprano + Alto)

The nightmarish bell is ringing again,
Like a demon's call.
Piercing like thousands of needles stinging your head,
Frightening like millions of worms nibbling your bones.
A new round of humiliation.

Tenor and Bass:

The wheelbarrow is packed full, again,

Like yesterday, like every day.

It is a lovely day ,

Good to do something pleasant.

Bad luck to be sent to do this laborious work,

Hurry up to finish it, to get back to the cozy bed.

Shuying: (Dead, Lian saw Shuying's body in the wheelbarrow as if she heard what she said.)

There will be a day, you will be free.

To restart your life,

To see the world,

The beautiful world.....

ACT III.

Scene 5

Back now, children are playing around.

Children: We won, we're free!

We are not slaves anymore!

We won! We're free!

We are the hosts like before!

Madman: There is a car coming,

Along the newly built road.

There was a brook down here,

The water was as clear as glass.

Volunteers: It is time to visit them again.

Beautiful village, lovely people.

Time flies, most of those survivors have passed away.

I hope Granny Lian is keeping well.

Hurry up! Don't make her wait.

Madman: She is waiting for someone, unfortunately, not you guys.

Lian (old): Another day passes,

I've been waiting for you.

Waiting for the light in my life.

How long have I been like this?

He burst into my life, like a light.

He brought hope to me.

I can't believe I can also love,
after experiencing what I did.

He said he came from far away,

I said I never left this place.

He said that the mountains and rivers here are lovely,

I said the scenery here was better ten years ago.

He asked me about my family,

I said they died in the war.

People from the background back then:

The war? The war. The war!

Lian: (Don't want to admit it but has to)

The war. The war.....

I survived, with the hope of my companions!

He turned silent, and one day, he left.

Where did he go? What is he doing?

And why did he leave?

Madman: Because he heard it!

He knew the past that you tried your best to forget. **Lian:** Ah!

Aren't people all the same?

Who would have the courage

to carry such a heavy past with you? **Lian:** It's not true.

Stop waiting, it is meaningless..... **Lian:** No. It's not true.

Lian: I trust Shuying, I survived, I trust him, He'll come back. **Madman:** Stop waiting, it's meaningless, meaningless!

(Door knocking)

Lian: It's him!

Volunteers: Granny Lian, here we are!

Lian: You guys..... welcome.

Madman: Stop waiting, it is meaningless.

Who would have the courage to carry such a heavy past with you?

Rishim: Thirty years, I work towards the same goal every day.

Just hoping to find justice for them.

I encourage them to speak about their experiences.

I hope they can get more attention,

But there are always people who talk about them behind their backs.

I realized that might not have been the best way.
They've already carried so much; now they are carrying more.

It's been thirty years,
I work towards the same goal every day.
But cannot get a result.

They've been waiting for their whole life,
But cannot get a single apology.

Scene 6

Choir: We won, we're free,

Madman: Pretend to live like before?

Choir: Geese passing, the sound remains.

Madman: What has happened will always be remembered.

In different ways.

Madman: These flowers are growing gorgeously.

They are nourished by Lily,
The prettiest girl in the village,
Who was buried under it.

This tree is bearing pears again,
Louis was hanging on it for three days,
As a movable target.
The river turned to road,

Flowers never bloom the same colour as before.

Things that happened here keep playing in my head,

Whether my eyes are open or not.

It rolls, it roars, it tortures me,

Whenever I am awake.

To live like before,

To start it over again,

If it was you,

Could you do it?

Easy to sing,

Hard to do.

Don't tell me what to do,

If you never experienced it.

Choir (people):

We won, we're free!

We are not slaves anymore!

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ACT IV.

Scene 7

1. *Solo, a soprano from the choir.*

Why point your bayonets at me?
I've done what you said,
I only want to live.

2. *Solo, an alto from the choir.*

The relationship between a mother and her child is living or dying together.
That day, they snatched you from my womb.
How can I live alone without you?
My baby.....

3. *Duet, a little boy singing Beijing Opera with a little girl speaking the lyrics.*

The day, I was ten!
I tried my best to run around my school playground,
But could not get away from those men in uniforms.

And then, I did not feel anything,
But sharp pain.

Choir:

4. Why point your bayonets at us?

We've done what you said,

We just want to live.

Electronics:

1. Only the dead can't speak,

Only the dead can keep secrets.

5. Are we instruments of experiments?

2. Unrecyclable, used one time, throwaway.

Alive, bleeding, products with beating hearts?

3. Keep the secrets,

These terrible secrets,

The secrets everyone knows.

6. Gambling is fun, isn't it?

Each of our lives was used as a bargaining chip,

4. We are a country of etiquette.

To complete your newly invented killing game.

Can't let the world know this secret.

Otherwise, it will threaten our future comfort.

7. And the weather was so good that day!

We were ordered to go to a wilderness.

Hand in hand,

Familiar faces,

Long-lost warmth.

Encouraged each other,

Just like going back to the past.

We looked up at the blue sky,

Bathed in sunlight,

8. Suddenly, our bodies were soft like fallen leaves,

That even the wind could blow away.

We stood transfixed,

Fell down,

With eyes open still,

Watching the sky.

Electronics: Electricity, electrocution.

Powerful, traceless, and neat!

Now, let's erase this memory together.

We keep this secret,

Because we are a country of etiquette.

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Choir :

9. Telling lies is your trademark trick, (canon)

Whether before or after the war.

Mad man:

10. You make every effort to try to cover up the crime by all means ,

But the truth of history is like tattoos,

Ink made from blood,

Will leave traces eventually!

Scene 8

Lian:

11. Another day passes,

The sun will rise up tomorrow, as always.

12. The world is so fascinating, so wonderful.

Sustain your life to witness it.

Just like I have done.

The End