



First published in 2024 by
Andersen Press Limited
20 Vauxhall Bridge Road, London SW1V 2SA, UK
Vijverlaan 48, 3062 HL Rotterdam, Nederland
www.andersenpress.co.uk

2 4 6 8 10 9 7 5 3 1

Published by arrangement with Transatlantic Literary Agency Inc.

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Typography by Robin Ha and Dana Fritts

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data available.

ISBN 978 1 83913 487 6



Printed and bound in China

한이 맺힌 사람들을 위하여

For those who carry “han (한)”
in their hearts







Prologue: The Legend of Gumiho

Gumiho is a magical nine-tailed fox well-known in Korean folktales. Her story has been told in so many ways throughout history that it is difficult to pinpoint who she really was and where her legend originated.

In the modern era, Gumiho is often depicted as a succubus-like character who disguises herself as a beautiful woman to lure men to her in order to consume their livers, hearts, or souls. The older versions vary, from a dragon-hunting demigod, to a benevolent creature that helps Buddhist monks, to a fox who falls in love with a man and longs to become a human.

Gumiho has many magical powers, including conjuring illusions and shape-shifting into other animals and humans. She can live for hundreds of years, and the older she gets, the more powerful she becomes.



Foxes have been linked to supernatural phenomena and superstitions in Korean culture. Shamans and courtesans in the past have used the dried uterus of foxes to bring good luck. Gumiho (nine-tailed fox), Bulyeowoo (fire fox), Baekyeowoo (white fox), and Yeowoo (fox) are used as derogatory terms for evil women.




A Brief Overview of the Society in Joseon

The Joseon Dynasty was the kingdom that ruled Korea from 1392 to 1910. People lived in the confines of the class and gender they were born into. The top ruling class was called Yangban, which consisted of scholars and warriors.

Below Yangban were Joongin, which included government employees, military officers, and illegitimate children born between Yangban and the lower classes.

Below Joongin were Sangmin, who were farmers. They had little social status and were poor. They made up the majority of the population.

The lowest on the social ladder were Cheonmin. Their professions were considered "unclean" by the upper classes. They included butchers, shamans, shoemakers, prostitutes, entertainers, and executioners. Indentured servants and slaves, called Nobi, also belonged to this class.

A traditional Korean street scene. In the foreground, a woman in a yellow Hanbok with a red ribbon and a green head covering is walking. To her left, another woman in a light blue Hanbok with a white head covering is walking. In the background, a young girl in a blue Hanbok is walking. The scene is set in a traditional Korean village with tiled roofs and pine trees.

Joseon was a patriarchal society, and it was forbidden for women to be educated or to own property. Women lived in separate quarters from men, called inner quarters. They also had to cover their entire bodies or be transported in a litter if they had to leave their homes.

It was normal for men to have several wives. The most important duty for women was giving birth to a son.

The only women who were exempted from these rules were high-class courtesans called Kisaeng. Kisaeng were allowed to be educated so they could serve as companions to Yangban men.

General Song's Household

송씨가문

Name: Halmum
Age: Unknown
Personal servant of Meorhu (Nobi).
Class: Cheonmin

Name: Tamjin Song
Age: 34
General of the Royal Legion.
Headmaster of the martial arts school Palgwaedan.
Father of Jinho, Bisap, and Kai.
Class: Born Joongin. Became Yangban for killing Gumiho.

Name: Meorhu Kim
Age: 34
First wife of Tamjin.
Mother of Kai.
Suffers from chronic joint pain and fatigue.
Class: Unknown

Name: Gilsung
Age: 12
Grandson of Halmum. House servant (Nobi).
Class: Cheonmin

Name: Sunhwa Lee
Age: 32
Second wife of Tamjin.
Mother of Jinho and Bisap.
Class: Yangban

Name: Kai Song
Age: 10
Only daughter of Meorhu and Tamjin.
Half sister of Jinho and Bisap.
Class: Joongin

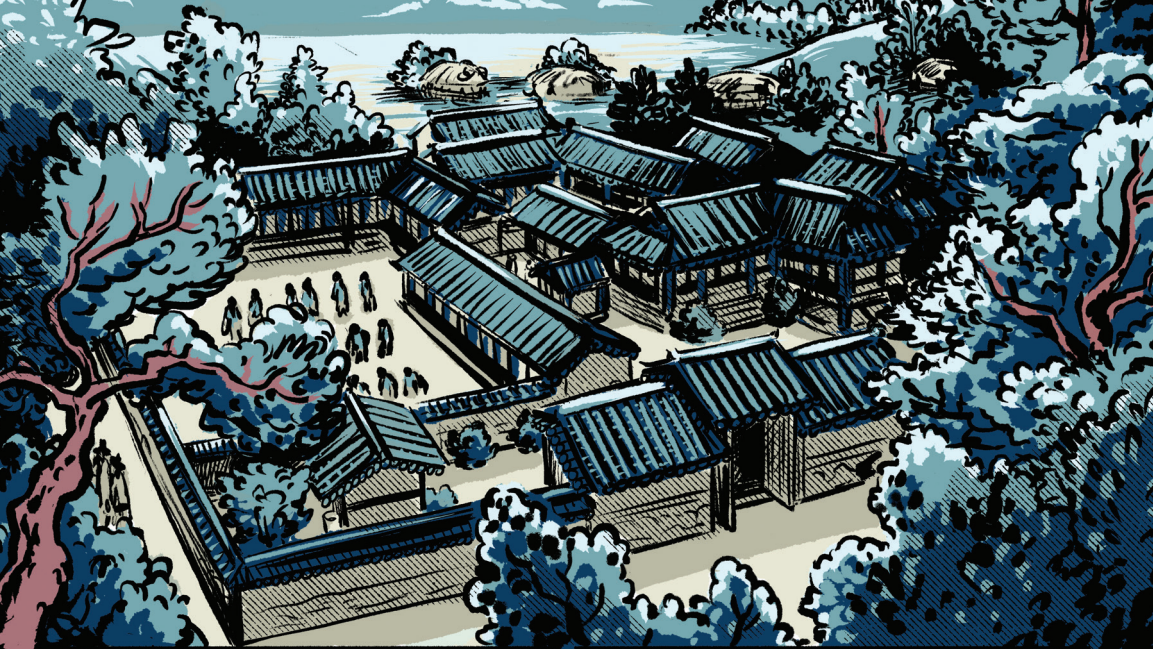
Name: Bisap Song
Age: 12
Second son of Tamjin and Sunhwa.
Half brother of Kai.
Class: Yangban

Name: Jinho Song
Age: 14
First son of Tamjin and Sunhwa. Half brother of Kai.
Class: Yangban



GUMIHO'S DAUGHTER

Outskirts of Hanyang*



The inner quarters of General Song's house

Keep your backs straight and do it again.

Excuse me, Master Song. Your students are ready for you in the main yard.



All right, keep practicing. I'll be back to check on your progress.

Father, please. Could we join the class?



*The capital of Joseon



*"The Way of the Eight Gates" is a fictional martial art form.



