

NOMINATION FOR THE HANS CHRISTIAN ANDERSEN AWARDS 2020



# Writer

LEE GEUM-YI

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KOREA



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## 01 Biographical information



Lee Guem-yi was born in Cheongwon, Chungcheongbuk-do, Korea in 1962, moved to Seoul in 1968 and grew up there. Though she has lived in Seoul ever since, she has repeatedly visited her grandmother in her hometown. Later, she expressed that her grandmother's infinite love became her strength, that it has given her a positive attitude toward life or the very source of her self-esteem, and that it has made her never to allow self-denial throughout her life. In particular, her grandmother told Ms. Lee a log of stories, which later created the power of storytelling in her and the foundation of her own creations.

The young Geum-yi, deeply absorbed in stories, was guided into reading through *the World Literature Collection for Boys and Girls* her father bought for her in her primary school days. Especially, Johanna Spyri's *Heidi* inspired her to be a writer. It was even before Geum-yi came to know that the genre of *Heidi* is children's literature. After graduating from high school, she chose a career as a writer instead of going to a college and began to write. In 1984, she made a debut as a writer when she was awarded a prize for her children's story in the Saebut Literary Contest, and in 1985, she won the literary contest organized by the children's magazine, *Boys' Choongang*.

Writer's | Homepage: <http://leegeumyi.com>  
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In 1989, she moved to the agricultural town of Cheongwon in Chungcheongbuk-do where she was married. Her return to her hometown was partly under the influence of her husband who dedicated himself to the agricultural community movement with a deep interest in farmers' life. Back in her hometown, however, she faced the dooming reality of agricultural villages and went through multiple conflicts. Korean farming villages were getting more and more economically depressed as the gap between cities and farming villages got larger. It was because people put more weight on industrial development. Accordingly, it led to the disintegration of the rural family, and many rural children became alienated. Plus, farming villages were exposed to more and more environmental pollution. In the midst of these problems, Lee Geum-yi developed her will to protect nature and the environment. She sharpened her awareness about problems within the agricultural communities.

In 1999, however, faced with worsened economic prospects, she ended rural life and moved back to Seoul. She committed all of her time to writing books for children and young adults. The outcome is to be one of the frontiers in young adults' literature, which was new to Korean literature. She successfully addressed a variety of social and psychological issues teenage girls suffer as the main theme of her work. Since *Yujin and Yujin* in 2004, she has mainly written novels for young adults.

In 2016, Lee Geum-yi published a long historical fiction, *There, May I go?*, after many young adults novels. Her attempt of a new genre shows how diligent Lee Gem-yi was even after she became one of the best writers of young adult novels. For this work describing a sad secret of the Korean modern history along with problems of teenage girls, Lee Geum-yi was made the Writer of the Year in 2018 and was on the Honor list in 2018.

## 02 Contribution to children's literature

### ■ Featuring women's life

"Women" is an integral theme to Lee Geum-yi. She got awakened to women's issues from her own experience of marriage, childbirth and child rearing. She developed a new perspective toward women's life after her marriage and began to wonder how to describe female characters in her stories while raising her own daughter. One of her early works, *Keundori's Place in Bamti Village*, describes an unorthodox step-mother, which raises the question, 'What is motherhood?' This new character is a development from the existing step-mother in Korean literature.

In 2004, she also published a young adult novel titled *Yujin and Yujin*, which looks at the sensitive issue of sexual assault. This novel is about two girls with the same name. Both girls were sexually molested in their kindergarten days, but the outcomes are strikingly different as each girl's mother reacted in a different way. The writer made a clear point in the novel that adults' roles are very important in young girls' or teenage girls' sexual abuse cases, and that, it may lead to a tragedy as the victim loses her self-esteem when a wrong approach is taken.

This novel causes a great sensation with its significance that it brought teenagers' sex issues to the public's attention, which was taboo in children's and young adults' literature. Starting with this novel, Korea's young adult novels took off, addressing teenage girls' sexual issues in depth.

Another young adult novel, *The Moment the Ice Sparkles*, (2013) deals with a teenager girl's unwanted pregnancy and childbirth. While other young adult novels with the same theme solely focus on the heroine, this novel also reveals the teenage boy's worries as well. Again, it suggests a positive approach with a process of growth in which the girl and the boy face childbirth and childrearing together.

*Lee Geum-yi's recent work of historical fiction, **There, May I go?**, is centered on Korean modern history and the violence of war. In it, she describes the spectacular lives of two girls, Sunam and Chaeryeong, from the 1920s until now. This novel sheds a light on modern Korean history. In particular, it addresses one of the biggest social issues from the time, the Japanese army's use of comfort women during the Second World War. It portrays the unfortunate life of a powerless women in Korean history through scenes of Sunam's service as a comfort woman and her rape by Japanese runaway soldiers when the war ended.*

Likewise, Lee Geum-yi always makes much of women as the main key word in her works of young adult novels. Korean teenagers are suffering competition, too severe to be found elsewhere in the world, and the behavioral standards toward teenagers are also very high. Teenage girls are facing a more difficult life than boys due to the still dominant patriarchy. This book reflects this harsh reality, while focusing on a women's life. Her attempts have improved Korean young adult literature to a great degree and rendered an opportunity to reflect on teenage girls' life in a Korean society.

Lee Geum-yi's affection toward young adults has interacted with the readers' responses so well that the writer has changed through the interaction. Currently, Lee Geum-yi is working hard to identify her stories with her life as a member of Gender Equality Board of Children and Young Adults Book Writers Union of the Republic of Korea.

## ▪ Focusing on the space, agricultural village

To Lee Geum-yi, an agricultural village is not simply the background of her narratives, but the arena where the overall themes of her literature are based. First, its meaning is the space as everlasting nature which accepts and trusts her. Her debut story "With Younggu and with Heukgu" along with "Uncle Bong-sam," her first feature story, *The Flower Win on the Farm*, and *The Tree that Grows in My Heart* are all set in an agricultural village. They talk about the comfort only nature can offer.

Second, an agricultural village is a place that shows the cold reality of Korean society. The agricultural village Lee Geum-yi experienced in Cheongwon, Chungbuk after marriage was far from the ideal one that she had built from her childhood memories. The cold reality she faced in adulthood was the true picture of an agricultural village because the economic gap between cities and agricultural towns had never been ever bigger due to the radical modernization of the country after the Korean War. Economic problems with agricultural villages affected children's lives in the form of family disintegration. Lee Geum-yi, who had written several works set in agricultural villages and gained the title of 'the Writer of Agricultural Villages,' now began to question the values she had described in her stories after she saw the cold reality.

*Her first work after her return to the country is **Keundori's Place in Bamti Village**. In the work, Keundori and Yeongmi are a brother and sister whose family are in need. Their father is economically and psychologically incompetent, and their mother left home. At the suggestion of an old neighboring woman who takes a pity on the family, Yeongmi was sent away for adoption to a foster family in a city. Though her foster father and mother are good-hearted, Yeongmi fails to adjust herself to the environment.*

This problem is solved by Patji Mom who became Keundori's father's wife. The nickname, 'Patji Mom,' came from the step-mother character from a traditional Korean story titled *Kongji and Patji*, AKA Korean Cinderella. She is called the Patji Mom because she is big and tough, but she betrays all the expectations we have toward a step-mother.

In the two more works that followed *Keundori's Place in Bamti Village*, the original story expands far enough to address how to support old parents as well as motherhood issues of biological mother and step-mother along with adoption issues. All of these represent what are happening in Korean agricultural communities like Bamti Village.

Though Lee Geum-yi focuses on the problems in Korean agricultural villages, she perceives them as a space where humanity is still pervasive unlike in cities. A children's story, *You Are Also a Twilight Lily*, is about a girl named Mir who moved into a village with her mom when her doctor mom is relocated to be the head of the village's public health center. It depicts how she overcomes her difficulties with her strength gained from nature. The real contrast between cities and villages in her stories makes modern Koreans reflect on their lives. They create ripples in their sentiments as many of them left villages and now live in cities due to radical urbanization.

## ▪ Noting the underprivileged and those of minority groups

The subjects of Lee Geum-yi's works deal with do vary. A common feature, however, is the writer's strong will to reflect the dark side of Korean society.

A feature children's story, *The Country Where My Mother Lives*, is about a South Korean boy who accompanies his grandfather, a displaced man from North Korea during the Korean War, on his visit to Mt. Geumgang in North Korea. The writer visited Mt. Geumgang herself and created a story from her experience and her wish for reunification of the Korean peninsula and the reunion of separated families. Another story, *She Is Just a Little Different from Me*, features a girl with a developmental disability to challenge common stereotypical ideas.

In fact, her interest in minorities is in keeping with her position as one of the first writers of young adult novels. Teenagers are the age group with a lot of difficulties in Korea, and public awareness of teenagers' human rights and culture is still underdeveloped. Only in the 2000s, literary works began to depict teenagers not as those to be educated, but those with cultural agency. In this sense, Lee Guem-yi was truly one of the pioneers.

With her sincere effort to tackle various subjects and a truthful heart toward literature, Lee Geum-yi has made a big contribution to Korea's children's and young adults' literature.



## 03 Essays on Lee Geum-yi's work

### *Local Topophilia in Lee Geum-yi's Children's and Young Adults' Stories*

A majority of Lee Geum-yi's works are set in agricultural villages with local colors. The writer has a special topophilia towards local space. Her writings can roughly be broken down into three periods by her personal experience of developing local topophilia and her publication history by year.

Period 1 is from when Lee Geum-yi's development of local topophilia from her childhood to the publication of *Barefoot Children*. The rural village during this period is based on ecological values. After she moved to Cheongwon, Chungbuk, however, the reality of the agricultural villages oppressed her local topophilia. During this period, the rural villages are represented as a space of alienation.

Period 2 is from 1999 when she left an agricultural village for Seoul again in 2004 when she began to focus on writing novels for young adults with the publication of *Yujin and Yujin*. The rural village during this period is depicted as a hometown to return to with dreamy touches. The characters in her works have lost and missed their hometowns.

Period 3 is after the publication of *Yujin and Yujin* up to now. During this time, Lee Geum-yi moved from children to young adults, from agricultural villages to cities, although the rural space is still present in her works. With cities as primary space and local space as secondary one, people are hurt and in conflict in the primary space while they are healed in the secondary one.

Lee Geum-yi's view of the two spaces are very contrasting. Originally, agricultural villages were ideal spaces with a slight touch of dreaminess, but since *Barefoot Children* they degraded into a secondary space. Cities, however, have been made main place for living, which used to be an ideology oppressing rural areas, but have emerged as the primary space. Another point to make is that the positive power which embraces her original topophilia has enabled her to broaden her horizon of her literary world.

Lee Geum-yi's original local topophilia consists of trust in nature and ecosystem and of esthetic images. It is also about an infinite love that accepts one's own self and life. The local topophilia also helps Lee Geum-yi to overcome the simple binary division between cities and rural areas. Again, her characters go through a process in which they face and accept themselves as they are before they gain topophilia which 'spatializes' the world. That is to say, they gain the power with which they can accept the world they belong to. In this sense, topophilia is the product of self-acceptance and self-acknowledgement. Lee Geum-yi's local topophilia is reflected in the process where her characters gain topophilia. Thus, her agricultural villages are not simply the background for narratives, but the arena that offers power of 'growth,' an important value necessary to children's and young adults' literature, and they are deeply connected to the dominant theme of her literary world.

*Cho Myung-ah,*

*PhD Dissertation, Konkuk University 2016*

From the abstract of "A Study on Local Topophilia in Lee Geum-yi's Children's and Young Adults' Stories"

## 04 Interviews with Lee Geum-yi

*I live; thus, I write.*

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**Q.** Can you tell us about your childhood and writing apprenticeship?

**A.** Can you tell us about your childhood and writing apprenticeship? My illiterate grandmother loves stories. She always carried me on her back to visit an old neighborhood woman who read books to children. When I moved to Seoul and started to go to school, I had been deeply absorbed in stories. And *the World Literature Collection for Boys and Girls* my father bought for me enkindled my dream to be a writer. I started writing when I graduated from high school in 1980. My father dissuaded me from writing, saying a high school graduate cannot be one. Still, I could not understand how one could learn to write in college.

When I read the winners' writings from the literary contest of *Boy Choongang*, I realized my novels are actually for children. At that time, the contest of children's stories was administered by *Boys' Choongang*, a children's magazine, and called for 105-page-long stories for children. (The length was for three serial publications in the magazine.) I sent one of my writings, "A Child and a Bird, for Trial," and it made the final screening. It is how I learned what I wanted to write.

In the same year, 1984, my short story, "*With Younggu and with Heukgu*," won the Saebut Literary Prize. In 1985, I entered the *Boy's Choongang's* Literary Contest again, and "*Uncle Bongsam*" won the prize and made me a professional writer. My dream had come true.

**Q.** Please tell us about the days in the agricultural village you moved to after marriage.

**A.** After I debuted as a writer, I came to meet a man who was into the famers' movement and fell in love with him. As you know, college students were leading the democratic movement during the 1980s' dictatorship. I had this huge sense of debt to them and, at the same time, a sense of longing to them because I had not participated in such activities. I chose to marry him despite my parents' objections and went to an agricultural village with him.

The rural areas had been where I spent a happy childhood, accumulated happy memories during vacations and stayed for writing after I became a writer. I was not afraid of living there. I also had a dream of raising my future children on a farm. However, the reality in an agricultural village was daunting. A totally new environment was waiting for me because my value as a writer became useless there. Women in agricultural communities had to work just like men while taking care of all house chores. Though I did not engage in farming, it was way too challenging for me to support my husband's activities while doing house chores and raising children. I wrote on the issues I came across in the rural community, carrying my child on my back or after I tucked them into bed, cutting down on my sleep.

I had published two books before marriage. Apart from my first stories, "With Younggu and with Heukgu" and "Uncle Bongsam," my first feature story *The Flower Wind That Blows on the Farm* and *The Tree that Grow in My Heart* were all set in agricultural villages. However, the agricultural villages were constructs of my ideal concept of such villages, not of the reality. Even my first collection of stories, *With Younggu and with Heukgu*, was still in the same line. After I became a mother and raised my own children, I was able to depict real children in agricultural villages. *Keundori's Place in Bamti Village* is one of such works, and *Barefoot Children* is a sequel work I wrote to meet my calling as a writer.

**Q. Why did you leave the agricultural village after all?**

**A.** The economic recession during the IMF bailout made us leave. Agricultural villages were suffering from the recession severely, and a lot of farmers went bankrupt because they stood jointly responsible for their neighbors' loans. As my husband had run a business, things were worse in my family.

Paradoxically, my husband's failure rendered me an opportunity to take writing as my job. I had been writing for 15 years and published several works, but still I was not taking writing as my vocation. Literature as a mental pillar to me became a realistic prop in the time of my family's economic hardship.

As I took writing as my vocation, I became more aware of my readers and developed the sense of duty toward those who read my books. Moreover, though my life in my agricultural village ended with bankruptcy, the time I spend there made me realize how literature matters to me.

**Q. What made you take on the challenge a new genre, young adults' novels?**

**A.** The new genre emerged in the late 1990s. I had mostly written stories for 9 to 12-year-old children. Reading young adults' stories from other countries, I developed a desire to write something for Korea's teenagers. The teenagers I had known about before my son entered middle school were all the derailed ones who made the headlines of news programs. They all looked like juvenile delinquents or criminals. Since I could not write a thing with such a perspective, I waited for my son to become a teenager. As an assistant to librarians and an exam assistant, I frequented my son's school and closely watched teenagers for a while. After all, I found all the teenagers as lovely as my own child.

My first young adult novel is *Yujin and Yujin* in 2004. It addresses sexual violence issues, which I had thought about for long, as it had been difficult to put into stories for minors. Starting with *Yujin and Yujin*, I have written ten young adults' novels so far. The first five years of writing young adult novels was interwoven with my own children's teenage days. I was not a mother who stuck to her children's academic achievements. I believed setting a life goal is more important than test results and thought the parents' role is to help their children to find their own way. My second young adult novel, *The Whales In your Pocket* reflects such wish of mine. Things were peaceful until my children's middle school days.

Problems broke out after my children became high schoolers. High schools are like cram schools for college. I began to question such a life for teenagers who have to take their present as a hostage for their future. Writer Lee Geum-yi was in discord with Mother Lee Geum-yi, feeling confused and lost.

Even my children insisted on leaving school. My son wanted to go to a private academy to better prepare for the college entrance exam, while my daughter wanted to study in a freer environment. I felt so worried and uneasy, but I decided to respect their wishes. All my concerns of the times were also put into writing in the form of a sequel novel, *Cliff*.

Writing young adult novels, I found a new joy of writing, which helped me to understand my own children. If I had not written young adult novels, I would have had big troubles with my own children because one's writing interacts with their life.

**Q.** When you started a new challenge and wrote *There, May I go?*, you created a big sensation. Can you tell us about its publication?

**A.** When I first started to write about teenagers, it was an urgent task to depict their reality. After writing nine novels, however, I felt kind of trapped. It is because teenagers' life is mostly narrow with very confined settings and as a writer, I also felt confined. My writings were all set at home, school and private academies. So, one day, I decided to work on a story I had conceived of over a long time, maybe as long as my childhood. A new challenge leads you to a new path. With a deeper understanding of the Japanese Colonial Period, I began to think about stories set in the Period. In particular, I wanted to write about Taesul, whose story I had to give up on while following Sunam and Cheryeong's life's course. While I was writing this novel, it was good to revisit my own grandmother's life and other women of the times. I want to quote my research note for *There, May I go?* for your better understanding.

I had to transcend the barriers of time and space unknown to me in order to write the feature historical novel, *There, May I go?* The temporal setting of the novel is from 1920 to 1954, which covers the age of Korea's historical upheaval including the Japanese Colonial Period, Liberation, the Korean War and the armistice. Its spatial setting includes Korea as well as Japan, China, Russia and the US. It was a new challenge for me to go back in time. I had written stories mostly about 'here' and 'now' up until this point. This story required more preparation than anything I had attempted before.

*I arrived at the street where my hotel was after I had gone through the airport, took the airport shuttle bus and the complicated Japanese subway. Since it was not the tourist season, the harbor was quiet. Though the drizzling rain had stopped, the sky was overcast with dark clouds and the winds were strong. I felt lonely, watching those people hurrying back to home as if I had become a lone traveler without a destination. I was experiencing Junpei's feelings in her hometown. A Junpei inside me was reacting to the place.*

By writing a historical novel, I realized that imagination is as important as research and visiting the historical sites. Only when writing based on rich materials is met with free imagination, space, time, characters and events, it gains its own life and power, separate from the writer. All I had to do is just trust in my characters – Sunam, Chaeryeong, kanghui, Jeongkyu, Mr. Kwak, Sul's mom, and Taesul etc.

This novel is like a recording I put down while following the characters' lives, full of pain and sorrow. Whatever roles they have, however big their roles are, my characters have an intense life. As I believed in each and every of them, I was able to complete my long journey of writing. I thank all of them. Excerpts from an interview with Lee Geum-yi on *There, May I go?*

**Q.** One last thing you want to say as a writer?

**A.** I will keep writing as I have done for the past 30 years. I know the loneliness and pain of writing, but I also know the expectation of beginning to write and the joy of completing writing.

*I write; thus, I live.*

- From the writer's contribution in *Open-minded Children*

## 05 List of Award-winning works

- 2018 Made IBBY's Honor list for a feature story, *There, May I go?*
- 2017 Awarded Bangjeonghwan Literary Prize for *One Night*
- 2012 Awarded Yunseokjoong Literary Prize for *Feed*
- 2007 Awarded Sochun Literary Prize for *Withdrawal Symptoms*
- 1987 Awarded Gyemongsa's Children Literature Prize for *The Tree That Grow in My Heart*
- 1985 Awarded Boy Choongang's Literature Prize for *Uncle Bongsam*
- 1984 Made a debut when *With Younggu and with Heukgu* won Saebut Literary Prize

## 06 Lee Geum-yi'S Bibliography: Books published in Korea

1984

1. Made a debut with a short story *With Younggu and with Heukgu*(1984)
2. *Uncle Bongsam* (1985)
3. *The Tree That Grow in My Heart* (1987)
4. *The Flower Wind That Blows on the Farm* (Daekyo Culture, 1988) - Children's story  
- Revised Edition *Flower Wind* (Prooni Books, Inc., 1999)
5. *The Tree That Grow in My Heart* (Gyemongsa, 1988) - Children's story
6. Revised Edition *Be a Bridge* (Prooni Books)
7. *With Younggu and Heukgu* (Hyunam, 1991) - collection of children's stories

1995

8. *Keundori's Place in Bamti Village* (Daekyo Publishing, 1994) - Children's story

1996

9. *Barefoot Children* (Hyunam, 1996) - collection of children's stories
10. *My Tooth on the Roof* (Doosan Donga, 1996) - collection of children's stories
11. *Moraebat School, Bbanghodol* (Daekyo Publishing, 1996) - Children's story
12. Revised Edition *I Am Bbanghodol* (Prooni Books, 2011)
13. Revised Edition *Kkaebi of Dodeulmaru* (Sigong Junior, 1999) - Children's story
14. *You Are a Korean Wheel Lily* (Prooni Books, 1999) - Children's story
15. *Gua's Eyes* (Prooni Books, 2000) - Children's story
16. Revised Edition *Ham, That us Greek to Me* (Prooni Books, 2000)
17. *Earth Is Mother* (Prooni Books, 2000) - Children's story
18. *Yeongmi's Place in Bamti Village* (Prooni Books, 2000) - Children's story
19. *You and I are a Little Bit Different* (Prooni Books, 2000) - Children's story
20. *The Country Where My Mother Lives* (Prooni Books, 2000) - Children's story

2000

2001

21. *Kimchi Is Also Kimchi in English* (Prooni Books, 2001) - collection of children's stories
22. *Ice Cream and Water Ski* (Prooni Books, 2001) - collection of children's stories
23. *I Am Right. It Is a Whale!* (Prooni Books, 2002) - collection of children's stories
24. Revised Edition *Pruni and Gouni* (2002)
25. *Worthy Kid* (Prooni Books, 2002) - collection of children's stories
26. *My Friend Jae-deok* (Prooni Books, 2002) - serial story
27. *Even Mito's Poops Are Pretty!* (Prooni Books, 2003) - children's story
28. *A Very Small School* (Prooni Books, 2004) - children's story
29. *Yujin and Yujin* (Prooni Books, 2004) - young adults' novel
30. *Stories of Twelve Animals in the Tripitaka Koreana* (Bomulchanggo, 2005) - collection of children's stories
31. *Bommi's Place in Bamti Village* (Prooni Books, 2005) - children's story

2005

eu-m-yis

**2006**

- 32. *Withdrawal Symptoms* (Prooni Books, 2006) – collection of children’s stories
- 33. *Whales in Your Pocket* (Prooni Books, 2006) – young adults’ novel
- 34. *How to Write Children’s Stories* (Prooni Books, 2006) – A guide book for writer-wannabes
- 35. *Teacher Hates Me* (Bomulchanggo, 2008) – collection of children’s stories
- 36. *Cliff* (Prooni Books, 2008) – young adults’ novel
- 37. *I Want to Marry My Teacher* (Prooni Books, 2009) – collection of children’s stories
- 38. *First Love* (Prooni Books, 2009) – children’s story
- 39. *No! I Don’t Know! Don’t Ask Me Why* (Prooni Books, 2010) – collection of children’s stories
- 40. *Our Class Internet Novelist* (Prooni Books, 2010) – young adults’ novel

**2010**

- 41. *Sohee’s Room* (Prooni Books, 2010) – young adults’ novel

**2012**

- 42. *Feed* (Prooni Books, 2012) – collection of children’s stories
- 43. *Mirage* (Prooni Books, 2012) – young adults’ novel
- 44. *When Ice Sparkles* (Prooni Books, 2013) – young adults’ novel
- 45. *Finding the Hidden Path* (Prooni Books, 2014) – young adults’ novel
- 46. *Fantastic Stories of Youth* (Sakaejul, 2014) – novel
- 47. *There, May I go?* (Sakaejul, 2016) – novel

**2016**

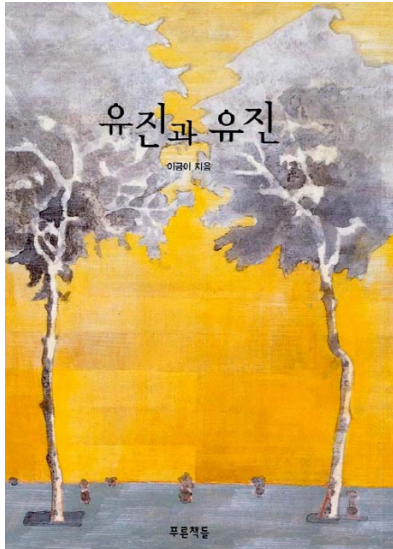
- 48. *One Night* (Sakaejul, 2016) – children’s Story

Bibliography



## 07 Translation Editions

### Yujin and Yujin



유진과 유진, 2004, Korea, Prooni Books

Written by Lee Geum-yi

- Publication Date: JUNE. 21, 2004

- Publisher: Prooni Books

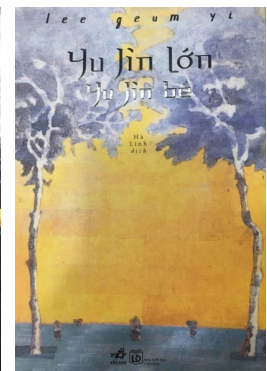
Translated in 3 countries (Korea, Vietnam, China, France)



幼真和幼真, 2011, China, Shanghai Xiron Media Co. Ltd



Yujin et Yujin, 2011, France, Editions Philippe Picquier



yu jin lón yu jin, 2018, Vietnam, Nha Nam Publishing and Communications JSC

### Whales in Your Pocket

Written by Lee Geum-yi

- Publication Date: APRIL, 30, 2008

- Publisher: Prooni Books

Translated in 2 countries

(Korea, China)



주머니 속의 고래, 2006, Korea, Prooni Books



口袋里的鲸鱼, 2012, China, Shanghai All One Culture Diffusion Co., LTD



## 08 Important titles

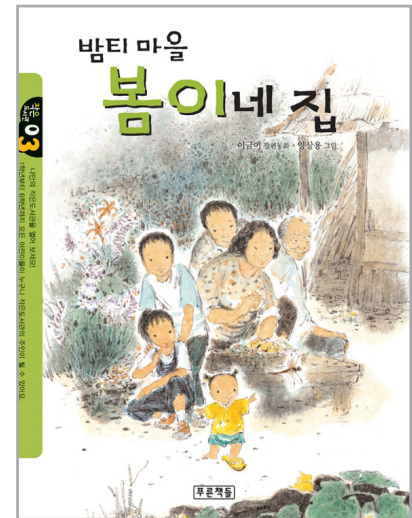
### Keundori's Place in Bamti Village series



1) Keundori's Place in Bamti Village  
(1994, Prooni Books, 143 pages, 173\*225)



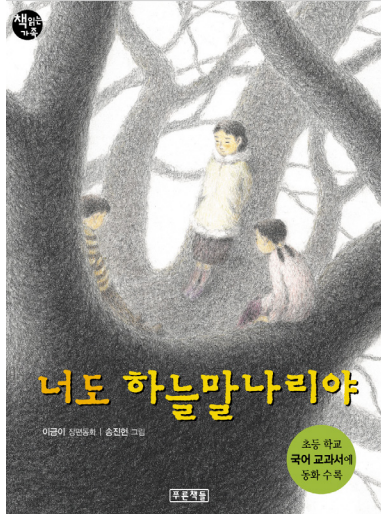
2) Yeongmi's Place in Bamti Village  
(2004, Prooni Books, 132 pages, 148\*210)



3) Bommi's Place in Bamti Village  
(2005, Prooni Books, 135 pages, 152\*223)

Keundol and Youngmi in an agricultural village are without their mother as she left them. One day Youngmi was sent away for adoption to a family in the city by an old neighboring woman's arrangement. Youngmi's foster parents have hearts of gold, but she cannot adjust herself to life in a city. Bamti Village becomes a place for longing to her. Back in Bamti, Patji Mom married Keundol's father and started to put together family members. Though Patji Mom is big and tough with a pockmarked face, she is good enough to bring back Youngmi and accept the children like her own. The sequel works, based on the tightly-bonded family with Patji Mom's love, deal with the problems of aging agricultural villages and the issue of motherhood through the encounters of the real mother and foster mother.

## Sohee's Room series



1) You Are a Korean Wheel Lily  
(1999, Prooni Books, 152\*223, 264 pages)

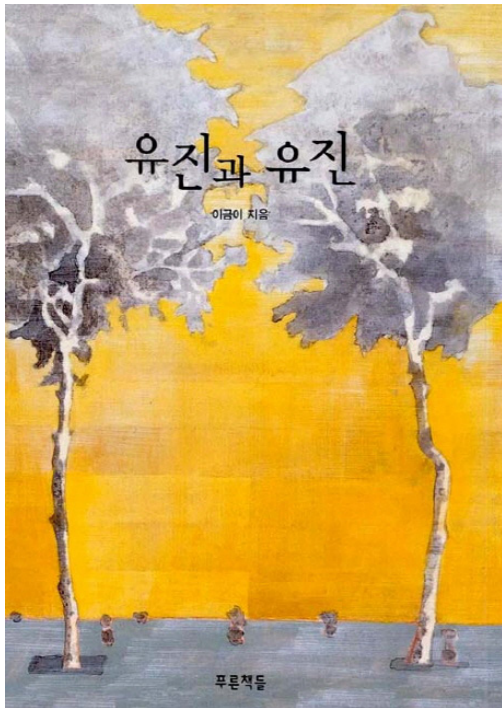


2) Sohee's Room  
(2010, Prooni Books, 127\*288, 304 pages)

*You Are a Korean Wheel Lily*, still set in an agricultural village, looks at single-parent families, which was a neglected topic in Korea though it was a part of modern families. Its sequel works show three teenagers suffering from changes in their families, revealing their psychological conflicts in the midst of family disintegration. For example, *Sohee's Room* portrays the protagonist Sohee's alienation and anxiety from her mother's re-marriage and encounters with new family members. The novel ends with how Sohee overcomes all the difficulties. *Finding the Hidden Path*, on the other hand, shows three boys and three girls trying to find their goals and future careers after graduating middle school.



3) Finding the Hidden Path  
(2014, Prooni Books, 127\*288, 240 pages)



2004, Prooni Books, Inc., 127\*188, 285 pages

## Yujin and Yujin

Two girls with the same name, *Yujin and Yujin*, are reunited in their middle school after their kindergarten years when both girls were sexually molested. The two girls' mothers' attitudes toward the incident are different. One mother tries to embrace her daughter while the other mother tries to turn away from what happened. The two girls' psychological states are different as well. The writer makes it clear that parents' or adult guardians' roles are vital for girls to recover from any trauma rising from sexual abuse. A wrong approach may lead to the victim's loss of self-esteem. This novel was a huge sensation in Korean society, in that it made public the issue of sex which had been a strong taboo in children's and young adults' literature in Korea.

## There, May I go?

The series deals with Korean modern history, focusing on sexual violence during the war. It is a historical novel as well as two girls' initiation story. Its temporal background is from the 1920s up to now, showing Sunam and Chaeryeong's spectacular life with a deep exploration of Korean modern history. Especially, it deals with tragedies during the Japanese Colonial Period and the Second World War. The story is built around the issue of the Japanese military use of Korean comfort women. Sunam's experience as a comfort woman and her ordeal from the remnant soldiers after the end of the Second World War bring back the unfortunate scenes of a powerless Korean women's life in modern Korea.



2017, Sakaejul, 145\*225, 612 pages



## One Night

Through this book, readers can think of their memories from their childhood and the love given from their grandparents, furthermore, the death and the eternity. One night without mom, dad tells a special story from his childhood inside the tent in the living room. On that day when dad left for fishing with his grandfather, a fish barely caught by his grandfather asked him to be free, and then, his three wishes will be come true. Therefore, dad released a fish and went to the sea palace, however, the soldiers in the sea palace tried to punish him by poking him 765 times and pinching him 949 times with pincers of a lobster. How come could dad come back home safely? The precious memory and exciting adventure of dad and his grandfather during one night is interestingly happening.



2016. Sakaejul, 165\*215, 96 pages

## The Country Where My Mother Lives



2007, Prooni Books, Inc., 173\*226, 167 pages

It is a story of a south Korean boy who accompanies his grandfather's visit to Mt. Geumgang. His grandmother was displaced from his hometown in North Korea during the Korean War. The writer paid a visit to Mt. Geumgang herself and wrote down her wish for Korea's reunification and the reunion of separated families. It depicts the beauty of Mt. Geumgang in North Korea and sketches a variety of people including the protagonist's grandfather. It also delivers concerns over the North and South Korean relationship and future prospects. This work can show both Korean children and international children the tragedy of war and the importance of community through this rare and sad history of the Korean division.

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## Chapter Translation

# There, May I go?

# One Night

# Yujin and Yujin



*There, May I go?*  
(2017, Sakaejul, 145\*225, 612 pages)

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*Prologue*

**A Story Yet To Be Told**

*an excerpt from the book*

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<The Daughter of the Viscount> is a TV documentary film that was specially produced for the 70th anniversary of Korea's restoration of independence. It featured Dr. Chae-Ryung Yoon, the heiress of the Viscount, whose title of nobility had been bestowed upon him during Japan's Annexation of Korea.

I was in charge of writing the script, so I had interviewed Dr. Yoon five times in advance of filming. Considering the fact that she was born in 1920, she was in rather good health. Apart from hearing aids, she did not require any other assistive devices such as walking sticks in her daily life. Her mind was sharp and she had a very clear memory of her past, especially of her adolescent years. Since those were the years we were mainly focusing on, we felt lucky. She also could provide enough material to support her words. But above all, the story of her life, in and of itself, was dramatic.

While the whole process was smooth and the result was satisfying, Dr. Yoon never got to see herself on TV. Soon after we had filmed her, she passed away. We were told that she went to bed that last day with the peaceful face of a child who had finished all her homework. Hence, the film came to be a documentary of her last days. In expressing our condolences, we inserted the scene of her funeral just before the closing credits. In hindsight, the scene was quite symbolic: We cannot hold time, but we will and should always remember what never shall be forgotten.

The documentary was well received. It was first aired late at night but soon was scheduled to air again on the very day of Korea's restoration of independence.

After <The Daughter of the Viscount> successfully aired, Dr. Yoon's grandson, Sung-Woo Yoon invited all the members of the film crew to his summer house in the suburbs. Mr. Yoon was the one who had made it possible for us to cast Dr. Yoon as the main character of the documentary. His summer house was just

on the outskirts of Seoul, by the river. His whole family was there as well: His wife, his eight-year-old son, and the six-year-old twin daughters. The barbecue party began. With the setting sun in the background, the garden of the magnificent villa was full of children's laughter. The atmosphere made me feel like I was in a TV series of some sort, a story which revolved around the high society.

Mr. Sung-Woo Yoon was indeed a member of the high society. Barely over 40 years old, he now had the whole Yoon-Sung Private School in his hands. With three private institutions from elementary to high school, it was a huge business. He had also inherited a formidable number of immovables. His father, Jinsu Yoon, was the only son of Dr. Yoon. He had however died in the early 1980s in the United States in a car crash. Being raised by his grandmother, Yoon had great respect and love for her. When we were chatting about this among the film crew, one of us blurted out that he would praise his own grandma like a god; but only if she were to give him all of those things. We all laughed in agreement.

Yoon thanked us in advance for the anticipated positive effect the documentary was expected to have on the application rates to his high school; amid controversy, he had changed its status into an autonomous private high school just last year. He also told me that he wanted to publish a critical biography of his grandmother. Although I consider any job that earns me a salary, I am in fact a novelist with two published books under my belt. Yoon had already done some background checking, I assumed. He told me that he wishes the biography to be an interesting read for readers of all ages. This was an attractive offer, compared to the usual ghostwriting jobs of autobiographies of celebrities or entrepreneurs. Yoon and I agreed to meet on another day to talk about the details.

Some days later, I got a call from the film production office, who told me that there was someone who had watched the documentary and wanted to have my phone number.

"What's this about? Can't you handle this at the office?"

When a program goes on air, several aftereffects follow. Calls of all sorts start ringing the phone: Complaints from angry viewers, or happy viewers who just wish to convey their gratitude. Some callers ask for contact information of the featured persons, and some callers wish to pass on important but belated information regarding the content. Most cases can and should be handled at the office.

"Well, she specifically asked for you, Miss Kang."

Had this person spotted my name in the closing credits of this marvelously written film and wanted to give me a job? Because, I had come across some good reviews of the text, although they were mostly from the people I knew already. All this had been possible thanks to Dr. Chae-Ryung Yoon, and I owed her. As soon as I told the guy at the office that he could give my number to her, I received a call - from the manager of a nursing home.

"I am so sorry for contacting you out of the blue. One of our residents wishes very much to meet you in person. She made such a cordial request that I just couldn't say no. I did call the broadcasting company first, but they gave me the number of the production office."

Her voice was very apologetic.

Viewers, in general, are not that interested in who has written the script. Nobody remembers the names of the writers. I was, therefore, curious to know who it was and why she wanted to meet me. She had watched <The Daughter of the Viscount>, so I assumed she was either an acquaintance of Dr. Yoon's or was holding some important information about her. The caller was, in fact, the same age as Dr. Yoon.

"She has something to say to you in private. She won't tell us what it is."

Was she a friend? If so, she might be wanting to tell me something more about Dr. Yoon. After all, as I was considering writing that biography of hers, so I told myself I should welcome everything that is in any way related to Dr. Yoon.

The next day, I drove down to the nursing home in Yangju, a small town in the outskirts of Seoul. I saw this as an act of displaying my passion and devotion to Mr. Yoon towards that job. Even if this did not lead to anything important, I figured it was worth all the trouble.

The nursing home was located just at the foot of a mountain. It looked like any of the other nursing homes that were sprouting here and there. I met the person who had called me. She looked my age.

"You came! I wasn't expecting you to do so. But really, thank you so much. Miss Soo-Nam Kim is here known as 'Doctor' Kim. She speaks fluent English, and you know that that's a very rare ability for her age. It's amazing how much she knows. She used to be so bright, but after she fell ill a few weeks ago, she became very fragile."

As the manager put it, if this person could speak fluent English and was given the nickname 'Doctor', she might as well be a true intellectual. If she was a friend of Dr. Yoon's, as I had assumed, the acquaintance must have been made during her years studying abroad. Had I known this before, it would have been nice to insert a short interview with her in the film. I realized that I was fascinated by Dr. Yoon's life much more than I'd thought.

The manager led me to the lounge. I could see several families gathering and some elderly people chatting among themselves. A few moments later, an old lady appeared. She was being rolled in by a carer, in a wheelchair. She was small and had short silvery hair. Her face was filled with wrinkles, both thick and thin. Although dark spots had invaded her skin, I could see that she had an elegant look about her. She and I had never met before, but I somehow felt like I knew her. But when people get old, they tend to look similar in some way or another.

The wheelchair came to a halt on the opposite side from me. The manager informed her that the person she was looking for was here. Tightly grasping her armrest, she fixated her eyes on me. I figured that she wanted to see if I was the person she wanted to meet.

"Good day. My name is Haeran Kang."

I bowed to her. The old lady told the carer and the manager to leave. We were now alone together, but she didn't say a word. She looked at me with her piercing eyes. All of her energy seemed to have gathered there. I was being stared at by a woman who has lived longer than twice of my age. As she was just about to see right through my deepest parts, I reluctantly decided to speak.

"You wanted to see me. Did you know Dr. Yoon? I see you are the same age. Are you a friend of hers?"



"I am the daughter of that viscount."

Her voice cut in through my sentence, trembling but clear. I was confused.

"What? What are you saying?"

"That I am Chae-Ryung Yoon."

"I don't understand what you're implying. Dr. Yoon passed away just a few..."

I couldn't finish my sentence. I had finally figured out why her face looked familiar to me. She and Dr. Yoon looked very much alike. Were they sisters? Wait, weren't they the same age? Which meant that they were twins? But as far as I knew, Dr. Yoon had no female siblings.

"She is an imposter."

Her tone was firm with belief and I fell silent. Thousands of thoughts were boiling and twirling inside my head. I couldn't do anything but stare back at the old woman. The more I looked at her, the more she looked like Dr. Yoon. If this grandmother sitting in front of me really was the daughter of the viscount, what did that mean for the film crew? I mean, what would become of me? The idea for the documentary film had, in fact, come from me.

While rummaging through some 20-year-old quarterly news magazines for research, I came across an interview of Dr. Yoon that she had given right after receiving a medal from the government. She is the founder of Yoon-Sung Private School Foundation, which is well known as one of the top prestigious private schools in Korea. But I would have not read the article, if not for the title: 'Born as the daughter of a viscount, she becomes the mother of Korean education'.

My curiosity sparked at the 'daughter of a viscount', rather than the latter part of the title. For I knew that throughout the history of Korea, this sort of European title of nobility had only ever been used during the time of the Japanese occupation: When Japan unjustly declared Korea as its protectorate, Korea was in the era of Joseon dynasty. When Japan's colonization began, titles such as 'viscount' started being used. This was hence nothing to be proud of since the titles were only given to those who had performed a meritorious deed for Japan. If a person accepted such a title of nobility, he or she was likely in the pro-Japanese group. But there are just too many cases where the heir of a pro-Japanese family member kept on living prosperously even after the restoration of independence. That explains how the two labels with clashing reputation such as 'daughter of a viscount' and 'mother of education' can belong to a single person.

However, I was curious why this person would reveal her 'title of nobility' at all, as it is not a compliment in Korean society today. And she did not even seem hesitant. This definitely promised that an interesting life story is hidden behind. Dr. Yoon's early years and adolescence coincided with the Japanese occupation, and the story in the magazine was short but intense, simple enough to stimulate one's imagination. At the time, she was in her mid-90's, and I assumed that she had already passed away. But it turned out she was alive.

I then started mapping out a plan for the documentary film, which was to be aired for the 70th anniversary of the Liberation Day of Korea. When I was done, I sent it to my university senior Mr. Jung, who used to work

for a broadcasting company, but had quit the job and was now the CEO of J production. When he was finished with reading the interview with Dr. Yoon and my film proposal, he was reluctant.

"She is neither a patriot of independence like Gwan-sun Yu nor did she go out on the battlefield to fight against the Japanese. There's nothing special. And the daughter of a viscount? You just don't say that, but she is an heir to one of the nation's most hated betrayers, the pro-Japanese group. We are sure to get into trouble for doing this. She's even still alive."

"People are not interested anymore in the stories and characters that resemble those from history books. She grew up as the daughter of a viscount during the Japanese occupation era, which means she is crazy rich. Why do people hate the cheesy TV dramas with billionaires but watch them nonetheless? Because they are interested, they are curious about the extraordinary. Stories of male patriots who have given up their status and prosperity to devote themselves to fight for independence? That's become a cliché now. But what about the stories of females from that era? Sure, there were some stories that feature Gisaeng, a couple of learned New Women, but there is none so far about a viscount's daughter. The story of Chae-Ryung Yoon is different from any other previous ones. It will be phenomenal. We'll be introducing a whole new character."

I won him over, and the result was a success. It really was, but...

I shook my head. No, it couldn't be. I had spent four months on research. I had met Dr. Yoon several times in person. I had dug up the data myself. This could not turn out to be a fraud.

"I am sorry, but I still don't understand what you are saying. Can you prove your words?"

Before I even finished my sentence, the old lady's facial expression rapidly collapsed. The light expired and vanished from her eyes and she looked as though she would wither away any minute. She suddenly got frightened and called her carer to bring her back to her room. Without a word of goodbye, she turned her back to me. Was I being ridiculed? No, there was something, but what was it?

"What did she tell you?"

The manager approached me and sat across the table. I could see that she was excited to hear what important and meaningful words had been relayed to me. It was annoying.

"Are you sure that she's mentally healthy? I mean, she claims to be the person from the documentary film. But the actual Dr. Yoon passed away a few weeks ago."

The woman must have picked up on the complaint in my voice, that she should have checked first before contacting me. She suddenly seemed a bit gloomy and said that it may be a sign of dementia. 'Dementia'. How this word seemed to calm me down. Dr. Yoon, who always seemed bright and certain about things, also occasionally made comments that didn't seem to make sense. Ninety-something is an age where always being meticulous is stranger than being sloppy. But even if she was suffering from dementia, why in the world would she make such an assertion? If there hadn't been any point of contact nor the smallest of reasons, why would someone even consider being somebody else?

"Does Miss Kim have any family?" I asked, trying to act indifferent.

"No, she has nobody at all."

The manager eventually concluded that my visit was in vain and apologized to me for wasting my precious time. I felt the urge to ask more questions but I patiently kept my mouth shut. The more you know about someone, the more you care about her. Yes, she was watching TV and she mistook Dr. Yoon as herself because she looks similar. Dementia does many strange things to one's head, and it can even make someone conjure up stories from scratch. That was my conclusion. The Dr. Yoon who was featured in the documentary on air, she should never be an imposter. No, she couldn't be a fake.

But why did Miss Kim's face and voice keep growing more vivid in my head? I wanted to go back and ask why she'd said what she said, but I couldn't, for I didn't have any time to spare. I had to look after my almost seventy-year-old mother and my fourteen-year-old daughter. My schedule was tight. All my tasks were just waiting in line to eat me up like little loan sharks. And getting my ex-husband to pay child support was even more difficult than getting a loan at a bank.

A couple of days later, I received a text message from the manager of the nursing home. Miss Kim asked for me. She was texting me on her behalf, she said, but I didn't have to come if I was too busy. I replied right away that I was on my way as if I had been eagerly waiting for her to contact me again. Right after sending that message, I dropped everything and started my car.

On the way, I was too anxious to even think clearly. What if something bad had happened to her? Dr. Yoon had been in good health when she suddenly passed away. You can never predict an old person's health. And Miss Kim kept saying that she herself is Dr. Yoon from the documentary. If she died or became mentally ill, I would never be able to feel at ease for the rest of my life. I stepped hard on the accelerator.

When I arrived at the nursing home, the first thing I asked about was her health. And yes, the manager informed me that symptoms of dementia had begun to show.

"But as of now, she's in pretty good condition. We just hope that the process doesn't speed up."

Moments later, I was sitting alone with Miss Kim. In her semi-private room for two, she was the only occupant. I saw that same look on her face she gave me when I first sat with her. She opened her mouth.

"Are you now ready to hear my story?"

Somehow I couldn't say anything. I could only nod.

This was the start of our relationship which would continue for several months. This was the beginning of a story, a long story yet to be told.



### **One Night**

(2016. Sakaejul, 165\*215, 96 pages)

- Translated from Korean to English by Jieun Suh

- Proofread by Regine Armann

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## **Fish, where are you?**

*a chapter excerpt from the children's book*

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Grandpa pulled out his fishing rods.

"I want to try too. I'm going to catch a ginormous fish."

I imagined catching a fish that was as big as myself. I bet there is no first grader in the whole world who's done it.

"Well, then we should bait up first," said Grandpa.

He opened up a tin can and placed it between us. Earlier in the day, dad and uncle had filled it up with live worms from the back garden. I looked Inside, and there were lots of live wiggly worms. I picked one up and threaded it on the fishhook, exactly as grandpa taught me. I felt like I'd done something awesome. I was sorry that none of my friends could see me. Seok may already have the red belt at Taekwondo, but he wouldn't have the guts to even touch the worm. And if Juneesaw me, she would tell me I'm the best. Did I mention that she was the first person I've ever liked more than my mom? Anyways, it was a pity that they weren't there.

Grandpa cast the fishing rods into the river. There were three fishing rods, and one of them was mine. The sun began to set. It painted the river red. My hands and feet were also being painted with red. To this day, I can still recall the exact shades of red.

I wanted to catch a giant fish right away. I was anxious and impatient. Time passed by, but the fishing rods remained still. I got bored.

"When am I going to catch a fish?" I asked.

"Impatience won't get you any fish, that's for sure. Let us wait a while," said grandpa.

"Until when?" I asked again. It was getting dark.

"Let go of your thoughts and listen carefully," grandpa told me. "You will hear new sounds."

I did what he told me to do. I could now hear the sound of water. The river had been flowing all the

while, but I didn't notice it until then. Somewhere in the darkness, a night bird was singing its song. I could even hear the light of the firefly.

That was when I realized: You listen not only with your ears. You can see the sound with your eyes, and feel it with your body. You can even smell and taste the sound.

Grandpa wrapped me up in a blanket. I soon got used to the sounds around me, and once again I got bored.

"This is boring. Grandpa, are you having any fun? You're not exactly catching any fish."

The sky darkened even more and I could now barely spot the fishing float. It was glowing in the dark like a firefly.

"I'm having all the fun in the world. This very moment with you is much more valuable than some fish."

"Why?"

I couldn't understand him at all. To be honest, we weren't that close. That day was the first time ever that I was alone with my grandpa. Grandma would always be on the kids' side, but grandpa was in charge of dealing with the naughty ones. I would play around at the dinner table and end up having a talk with him.

I was jealous of the older cousins who had gone on a fishing trip, but not because I wanted to be alone with my grandpa. I wanted to do whatever the older ones did. I was jealous of being ten years old. But grandpa kept saying weird things. Wasn't fishing his favourite thing in the world? But did he just say that fish wasn't as valuable as spending time with me? I was really confused.

"Why? Why is this moment more important than fish?"

"Because the time is never going to come back."

"What won't come back? We can come back again."

I didn't tell him what I was really thinking. I just wanted him to focus on fishing.

If I were to catch a giant fish, the older cousins would accept me. They'd let me in on their secret chats and let me play with them at nights out at the haunted barn. But grandpa just kept talking to me. He wasn't the no-nonsense, matter-of-fact and gruffy person that I knew him to be.

"If we come back here again, it wouldn't be the same as now. You see, time is like that river. Once the water has flowed, you can never bring it back. And it doesn't stop for a moment. That is why this moment is so precious. How about you? Don't you like being here together with your grandpa?"

It was dark, but I could feel his gaze. I dodged it.

"Bugs!"

Grandpa had lit a small lamp, which had apparently attracted tons of dayflies, moths and other insects that I don't even know the names of. Under the lamp, I saw a heap of dead insects.

"Grandpa, these bugs must be really dumb. They can see that others are dying, but they just keep coming."

"That's not because they are dumb. It's just their life."

"Dying is life? Aren't they scared of dying?" I couldn't understand.

"Minsu, why are you scared of dying?"

"If I die, I can't see mom and dad. Nor you, grandpa."

I felt bad about not having answered his question earlier. So I added that last bit, 'nor you, grandpa'.

I sat closer to him. In the dark, it was even more scary to talk about death.

"At my age, death is like a gift of life."

Death is a gift? This didn't make sense either. Maybe he'd never got a happy present before. He talked about many other things after that, but I don't remember anymore.

I drank some of the sweet hot chocolate that mom had packed in a thermos for us. But I think grandpa was sipping something else from his own flask.

I was still focused on catching that big giant fish. But after hours of waiting, I was bored to death.

"Grandpa, can we just go home? The fish have all gone somewhere else." I said, scratching my legs full of mosquito bites. I had been really careful to cover every bit of my bare skin with the blanket, but they got me nonetheless. Well, I guess the older ones were right. This was boring, dull, and you'd come back with nothing but a thousand mosquito bites.

"Daddy, when are you gonna tell us about the underwater palace and the dragon king?" Yuna asked, yawning. Junso was feeling bored as well. Suddenly, he was curious about something else.

"Dad, were you good at sports when you were in the first grade?" asked Junso.

"I wasn't much of a sports guy," answered dad. "But I did have a lot of friends."

"Which belt did you have at Taekwondo?" asked Junso again, who had a blue belt.

"I only had a green belt," answered dad.

"Daddy," said Yuna, cutting in. "Please tell me about the underwater palace now. I'm sleepy."

"Okay, okay. I'll tell you now about the princess, like the ones you like, Yuna. But this one, there is no princess like that in any other storybooks. And I met her. Isn't that just awesome?" bragged dad. His story was just about to unfold.



## *Yujin and Yujin*

(2004, Prooni Books, Inc., 127\*188, 285 pages)

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### Synopsis

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The main characters of *Yujin and Yujin* are two girls named Yujin. The two Yujins, who were sexually molested by the principal at their kindergarten, meet again in their middle school classroom when they become fourteen. In order to distinguish the two different Yujins in the classroom, they are called “Tall Yujin,” and “Short Yujin” based on the difference in their height. The memories of kindergarten flash into outgoing Tall Yujin’s mind as soon as she sees Short Yujin. Short Yujin, however, doesn’t even seem to remember Tall Yujin at all and acts coldly to her.

One day, Tall Yujin tells Short Yujin of the incident that happened when they were kindergarteners. Learning that some part of her childhood memory has been lost, Short Yujin falls into turmoil. The two girls are different because Tall Yujin’s parents embraced their daughter’s trauma with love and kept reminding her that “it was not her fault,” whereas Short Yujin’s parents oppressed their daughter, forcefully sealing up the trauma and pressing her to erase the memory.

As Short Yujin slowly recovers her memory, she strays as she wonders about her identity and becomes sad and disappointed with her cold-hearted parents. At one time the top student in her class, Short Yujin strays by smoking and skipping her after school academies to learn dance, all the while keeping it a secret from her parents. At the end of school break, Short Yujin’s parents find out about their daughter’s issues and lock her in her room and pressure her to go study abroad.

However, Short Yujin escapes from her house with the help of Tall Yujin and another classmate named Sora. Together they run away and take a train to the east coast. After enjoying a day of freedom and the view of the East Sea, the three girls lose their money and call for help from their parents. Their parents come to rescue them and each girl returns to her ordinary life, except for Short Yujin.

Short Yujin and her mother stay by the sea for one more day. During their stay, Short Yujin vents her oppressed sadness and anger to her mother and finds a way to reconcile with her. Gazing upon the dark blue sea at dawn, she finally perceives her inner self.

# Yujin and Yujin

Yujin and Yujin's issue of child molestation grabs the attention of readers. The author Lee Geumyi has stated that she wrote the story because she was inspired and shocked by the "Kim Bunam Incident" that happened in Korea in 1991. The "Kim Bunam Incident" refers to a murder that occurred when a child molestation victim became an adult at the age of 21 and killed her molester. The tragic life of the victim, a murderer by law, made a remarkable impression in the author's mind and eventually became a work of fiction for young adults.

The author Lee Geum-yi captures the typical teenager's daily life by portraying the growth processes and complex psychologies of Tall Yujin and Short Yujin, the victims of child molestation, while also handling the heavy issue of sexual molestation without taking on an overly depressing or dark tone. An especially interesting and intricate story is established through fictional devices such as the main characters who share the same name, an accidental reunion in their middle school classroom, and the psychology of a main character who fails to remember her friend from the past. Moreover, the alternating narration of the main characters demonstrates the strong contrast between their psychologies, further absorbing the reader into the book. Yujin and Yujin is a work that successfully conveys the author's intention to "lead readers to experience more than two outcomes by means of different characters in a fictional world that is unlike our reality where we need to choose either-or."

The writer Lee Geum-yi reminds us with her story Yujin and Yujin that sexual molestation is a treatable trauma, and she carefully warns against the outcomes of negligence or concealment.