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DIPLOMOVÁ PRÁCA

Dokkaebi in contemporary Korean imagination, as reflected in drama and  
fiction

Dokkaebi v súčasnej kórejskej obrazotvornosti a jeho stvárnenie v dráme a fikcii

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Prehlasujem, že som diplomovú prácu spracoval samostatne a uviedol všetky pramene a použitú literatúru.

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Traditional Korean mythology and folktale tradition has a very rich repertoire of creatures. Many of these have retained their traditional image and purpose while others have been modified with time. In my work I will take a closer look at the image of “*dokkaebi*”, a Korean goblin, in Korean contemporary imagination. In the center of my work will be the Korean TV-drama *Guardian: The Lonely and Great God*, released in 2016, and the novel *Familiar Things* by Hwang Sok-young. As Korean dramas are gaining a worldwide popularity, themes and tropes depicted in them are accessible to a wider audience. This enables them to showcase specific aspects of traditional Korean culture. For background, I will describe the traditional portrayal of *dokkaebi* in Korean tradition, the specific differences but also its similarities to other goblin characters around the world. In addition, I will explore the most popular goblin tales from Korean folklore. For the main part of my thesis, I will contrast the TV-drama *Guardian* with the novel *Familiar Things*, concentrating on the different or similar roles, functions, and images of the goblin. My secondary sources include general English and Korean academic literature on Korean mythology and folklore as well as literature on Korean dramas. This horizon will be complemented by reviews of the TV-drama and the novel on which I focus.

## **Anotácia**

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Tradičná kórejská mytológia a ľudová rozprávková tradícia má veľmi bohatý repertoár tvorov. Mnohé z nich si zachovali svoj tradičný vzhľad a účel, zatiaľ čo iné sa časom upravovali. Vo svojej práci sa bližšie pozriem na obraz „*dokkaebi*“, kórejského goblina, v kórejskej súčasnej predstavivosti. V centre mojej práce bude kórejská televízna dráma *Guardian: The Lonely and Great God*, vydaná v roku 2016, a román *Familiar Things* od Hwanga Sok-younga. Keďže kórejské drámy získavajú celosvetovú popularitu, témy a trópy v nich zobrazené sú prístupné širšiemu publiku. To im umožňuje predviesť špecifické aspekty tradičnej kórejskej kultúry. Ako pozadie popíšem tradičné zobrazenie *dokkaebi* v kórejskej tradícii, špecifické rozdiely, ale aj jeho podobnosti s inými postavami goblinov po celom svete. Okrem toho preskúmam najobľúbenejšie goblinové príbehy z kórejského folklóru. V hlavnej časti mojej diplomovej práce budem porovnávať televíznu drámu *Guardian* s románom *Familiar Things*, pričom sa sústredím na rôzne alebo podobné úlohy, funkcie a obrazy goblina. Medzi moje sekundárne zdroje patrí všeobecná anglická a kórejská akademická literatúra o kórejskej mytológii a folklóre, ako aj literatúra o kórejských drámach. Tento horizont doplnia recenzie televíznej drámy a románu, na ktoré sa zameriavam.

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## **Transcription**

In this thesis the Revised transcription of Korean language was used. When it comes to the Korean names, person's preferred transcription was used when available, otherwise the Revised transcription was applied.

## Introduction

Korean traditional folklore has a great wealth of mythological creatures and narratives connected to them. Many of them have been spread by generations and were modified with the passing time. The same can be said about their visuals. The Korean creature *dokkaebi* will be focused on in this thesis. Because of the great wealth of the folklore studies, with numerous sources with some that have not yet been translated to English, sources for the narratives connected to *dokkaebi* in this thesis are limited to the Encyclopedia of Korean Folklore and Traditional Culture by the National Folk Museum of Korea, as it can be considered a representative source available in English language. The *dokkaebi* creature can be very helpful to members of a community, however it can also play tricks on people and even be a cause behind fires or bad harvest. The Korean *dokkaebi* has even found its way into the contemporary media. In this thesis, the image of the *dokkaebi* in contemporary Korean media will be looked on. Specifically, in the Korean drama series *Guardian: The Lonely and Great God* (2016) and the novel by the author Hwang Sok-yong, *Nachigeun Sesang* (2011), more specifically the translation of the novel by the English name *Familiar Things* (2017) by Sora Kim-Russell. Both works include the creature *dokkaebi* to varying degrees. The characters from the novel are referred to by their English names from the translated version. The novel is referred to by its English translation *Familiar Things* as well.

Theoretical chapters will be introduced the first, explaining the most used terms related to folklore. After this, the etymology of the mythological creature together with the narratives recited from the encyclopedia are introduced in detail, talking about the creature's role in the folk narratives. Then the creature's visual history with its commercialism in recent years is talked about. Creature's references in popular music videos and lyrics or as a playable character in a video game are discussed as well. Included is also a chapter describing mythology of western goblin from other parts of the world as well, showing its appearances in western contemporary media. A brief synopsis of the drama and its review follow with a table compiling appearances of the *dokkaebi* in the drama divided into set categories. These are consequently dissected and talked about separately. The novel is analyzed in the same way, with the following chapter comparing

the appearances of the *dokkaebi* creature in the two works based on its visuals and functions.

### **1. Definitions of terms**

Before getting into the research itself, it is important to introduce basic terminology that is most relevant to this research and will be often referred to going forward. These are folklore, folk narrative, folktale, legend, and normative postulates.

Folklore is an essential part of any nation. It encompasses all of nation's folkways, as well as the cultural artefacts connected to them. Aspects of folklore can be divided into two main groups: physical items or relics and orally transmitted narratives and customs. Oral aspects of folk culture are defined to include myths, legends, folktales proper, proverbs, riddles, folk songs and any other features of the folk culture which are transmitted orally. The most important thing to note is that these must be first transmitted by word of mouth before being recorded in writing (Grayson 2001, 7). This research will focus on the oral tradition part of the Korean folklore, more specifically folktales and a legend.

According to Alan Dundes in his book *The Study of Folklore* (1965), folklore is an aspect of culture, but not all of culture, according to anthropologists. Myths, legends, stories, proverbs, riddles, ballads and other song texts, and other lesser-known genres are included, but folk art, folk dance, folk music, folk costumes, folk medicine, folk costumes, and folk beliefs are excluded. All of these are indisputable worthy of investigation, whether in educated or illiterate communities. Oral transmission is how folklore is passed down, however not all oral transmission is folklore (Dundes 1965, 11).

Folk narrative, being defined by Grayson as any long, orally transmitted, unsung narrative that has some currency within society. Proverbs, aphorisms, rhymes, and riddles are excluded from this classification due to their length, as are folk songs due to the fundamental musical element in their construction. Any story that is a "one-off" is also excluded. A story must have embedded itself inside a society's traditions. Myth, legend, and the folktale proper are three sub-classes of narrative in folktale narrative. However, the name "folktale" is frequently used to reference all three if these sub-classes, causing some confusion in categorization (Grayson 2001, 7).

A legend, as stated above is one sub-class of a folk narrative, that is told as if it was a recollection of an actual historical event. The main characters in the story are either heroes or ordinary people who do not have any innately heavenly qualities. The temporal context is frequently based on historical authenticity. The physical environment, likewise, is based on neighboring or well-known geographical characteristics (Grayson 2001, 8). These are all valid distinctions in a legend that this research will focus on called *Goblin Reservoir (dokkaebi bo)*. Protagonist of the legend is a military official Ma Jeon-mok, during King Gongmin's reign of Goryeo. We see that the required historical and geographical setting is present in this narrative, solidifying it as a legend.

As for a folktale, the most significant distinction between a folktale and a legend is that the listener recognizes the folktale as a piece of fiction, an entertainment or an entertainment with a purpose. Animals feature as major characters in these stories due to the acknowledgement of the story's fundamental fictitious nature. They frequently can communicate or be understood. Even though the temporal and physical settings are putatively realistic, the listeners do not interpret them as a description of a particular time or place (Grayson 2001, 8). As for this research in this sub-class of folk narrative will be included folktales such as: *Dokkaebi fire (dokkaebi bul)*, *Dokkaebi hat (dokkaebi gamtu)*, *Dokkaebi club (dokkaebi bangmangi)* and *Lady Dohwa and Bachelor Bihyeong (Dohwanyeo Bihyeongrang)*. In all these, *dokkaebi* or ghosts play a major role which sets them as being fictitious. They are also set in certain time period and setting but are not considered as fact-to-fact recollections of historical events, thus differentiating themselves from legends.

The aspects of a society's cognitive culture that state and explain its ethical framework are known as normative postulates. These define a society's preferred and prescribed behavioral patterns, as well as the repercussions of non-compliance. Although proverbs, aphorisms, and riddles are commonly used to represent normative postulates, this category of postulates is frequently used in the thematic structure of folk narrative, particularly folktales proper (Grayson 2001, 8–9). Introduction to normative postulates is vital to this research because of the use of *dokkaebi* character in children's literature and its connection to providing ethical and normative education to children. Basically, teaching children what behavior is accepted by the society, and which is not. A good example of this

function is in a folktale called *Dokkaebi club (dokkaebi bangmangi)*. There children get introduced to a negative effect a greed can have on their life and how they may be punished for it.

## **2. Etymology of *dokkaebi***

According to a paper by authors Lee Chae ron and Lee Yeong suk called: *The study of the Korean Traditional Hybrid Character Shape; for Jangseung and Dokkaebi* (Lee and Lee 2013), the term “*dokkaebi*” first appeared in the early Joseon Dynasty and was regarded to as “*dotgabi*”. The first syllable “*dot*” meaning the seed of grain, and “*abi*” part stemming from word *aboji* meaning father, thus symbolizing a man. Today’s name of the creature *dokkaebi* is derived from the name “*dutgabi*” it was firstly regarded to as. The creature had been prayed to for good fortune and fertility (Lee and Lee 2013, 21). These were depicted on many household items focusing on the visuals of the beings face and facial expressions. These depictions will be discussed and shown in more detail (see chapter *Visual history of dokkaebi*). As such, the patterns of *dokkaebi* with humorous and mischievous facial expressions that appear in Korean traditional cultural heritage are treasures containing the emotions and culture of Koreans.

*Dokkaebi* are one of the most characteristic non-human entities in Korean folklore, according to *Encyclopedia of Korean Folk Literature* (Chung 2014), first appearing in documentation in *Samgugyusa* (Memorabilia of the Three Kingdoms) in the story *Lady Dohwa and Bachelor Bihyeong*, in more detail (see chapter *Dokkaebi narratives in Korean oral folk tradition*). Many folk story collections from Joseon, such as *Yongjae jonghwa* (Assorted Writings of Yongje) and *Eouyadam* (*Eou’s Unofficial Histories*), have many accounts about *dokkaebi*. *Benefits of Befriending a Dokkaebi*, for example, is a story about a man who gets wealthy by using a *dokkaebi’s* powers as a material deity, as well as its appetite, unpredictable temper, and foolishness, before deceiving the *dokkaebi* and expelling it. The story illustrates the idea that gaining money through human relationships with *dokkaebi* is a reward for doing a good act, and that human intellect and good deeds are the driving force behind human civilization’s growth (Chung 2014, 356).

Examining the previously published volume two of the *Encyclopedia of Korean Folklore and traditional Culture Vol. II* titled *Encyclopedia of Korean Folk Beliefs* (2013) also edited by Chung Myung-sub, *dokkaebi* is characterized as a spirit possessing

extraordinary powers and abilities, utilizing them to enchant, tease, taunt, and sometimes offer help to humans (Chung 2013, 154). From this short characterization, we can sense the duplicitous nature of the *dokkaebi*, being often more mischievous than of help towards humans that cross its path. Continuing, how the *dokkaebi* comes to be, is explained, stating that it is believed they are formed from old, discarded household items, like brooms, rakes, winnow baskets, pestles and sieves, and objects stained with human blood, especially menstrual blood (Chung 2013, 154). This part is widely accepted by various scholars as has been cited above, and this origin of the *dokkaebi* being was utilized and adapted in both stories that are of focus of this study: a drama *Guardian: The Lonely and Great God* (2016), and novel *Familiar Things* (2017). In the drama, *dokkaebi* was born of a blooded sword which hilt depicted a historical image of the *dokkaebi* face. On the other hand, in the novel in the ending chapter a kind of a shamanistic ritual is performed by a character named Scrawny Mama, who is often possessed and serves a role of a shaman, where she gathers and buries ordinary, used household items. Then we can see a spirit of a deceased young boy whose cap was buried, briefly returning as a *dokkaebi*. Both instances will be discussed later in *Synopsis* chapter for each work.

When it appears it's usually in dim, humid, eerie corners, often in during night hours, however, it can appear during a day when the weather is foggy or raining. *Dokkaebi* likes to play practical jokes on people, such as challenging men to a night of wrestling or posing as a beautiful lady to entice them. They enjoy singing and dancing, as well as chasing after ladies. *Dokkaebi* are also prone to being foolish, as evidenced by the story of a *dokkaebi* who takes money from humans and continually repays them, making the people rich in the process. They possess magical abilities, capable of undertaking massive tasks like as creating a land by filling a pond overnight, serving a feast of delights from the land and sea, and giving excellent harvests, large catches, or great fortunes to mankind (Chung 2013, 154–155).

As was stated before in *Encyclopedia of Korean Folk Beliefs* (2014), ghost tales became increasingly diversified as Confucian ethics acquired greater influence in the country, indicating that there is a clear relationship between the growth of Korean supernatural beliefs and the increasing impact of Confucian principles. Grace Kim (2018) further deliberates that, because *dokkaebi* is seen as a “genuine Korean symbol”,

Confucianism provides a collective framework that allows Koreans to give it a greater cultural importance. This serves to construct *dokkaebi* folklore so that it is passed along through communal recreation rather than oral tradition, which is especially important given today's technological improvements. Confucianism's underlying community cohesion and filial piety have been proven to be valid reasons why Korean children will continue to learn about their national identity through the *dokkaebi* folk tales and why there is a contemporary academic dispute regarding how the *dokkaebi* is represented. In the last century, efforts have been made to legitimize and reclaim the *dokkaebi* folk belief as a central part of the Korean identity by publishing more printed works, producing children's cartoon and even Korean dramas, digitally designing new visualizations, and maintaining an academic conversation. These are all new traditions that modern Koreans have done to legitimize and reclaim the *dokkaebi* folk belief as a central part of the Korean identity (Kim 2018, 9–12). This translates to today's media where there are many videos online that retell the tales about the *dokkaebi* and are often used by teachers in pre-schools or kindergartens as a part of their curriculum to teach the children preferred and prescribed behavioral patterns based on Confucian values. The contemporary adaptation of the folk tale is the base of this work, not only in a digital space the drama *Guardian: The Lonely and Great God* (2016), but also in a written form of the novel *Familiar Things* (2017). There are, however, many other works related to the depiction of the *dokkaebi*. It's increasing relevance in today's media displays that Korean people can further develop old interpretations of group customs and represent them in a global sense.

### **3. *Dokkaebi* narratives in Korean oral folk tradition**

For the purpose of this thesis, referred to will be a folklore narrative, following the recites given in *Encyclopedia of Korean Folklore and traditional Culture Vol. III, Encyclopedia of Korean Folk Literature* (Chung 2014) that can be considered a representative work about folklore available in English. Specifically speaking: one legend: *Dokkaebi reservoir (dokkaebi bo)*, and four folk tales: *Dokkaebi fire (dokkaebi bul)*, *Dokkaebi hat (dokkaebi gamtu)*, *Dokkaebi club (dokkaebi bangmangi)* and *Lady Dohwa and Bachelor Bihyeong (Dohwanyeo Bihyeongnang)*. There are numerous other valuable sources and collection of the Korean folklore, specifically *dokkaebi* narratives but for the concise purpose of this



research the collection of narratives about this creature compiled by the National Folk Museum of Korea is satisfactory.

The *Dokkaebi reservoir (dokkaebi bo)* legend (Chung 2014, 121) has it that by feeding red bean porridge to *dokkaebi* or goblins, a reservoir was built. As was mentioned above there is also a legend connected to a military official Ma Jeon-mok, during King Gongmin's reign of Goryeo. To whom a *dokkaebi* built a fishing weir on Seomjin River. This helps to catch fish by blocking the flow of the river and these effects may be comparable to building a reservoir. In the *Dokkaebi bo* legend main character meets a group of *dokkaebi* and offers them red bean porridge (*patjuk*) in exchange for a reservoir blockage. When they finish the task overnight, the grateful protagonist prepares the red bean porridge (*patjuk*) and they shared it among themselves. However, there was not enough for everyone and one *dokkaebi* was left without any porridge. This made him very upset, and he pulled out few of the stones from the reservoir that it had constructed. Nonetheless, despite the heavy rain and flood that followed the reservoir did not collapse only few jets of water were visible from the places of missing stones. Likewise, there is a version of the legend where *dokkaebi* catch all the fish from the reservoir and bury them in the ground. This control over aquatic creatures displays why they are often worshiped among fishermen. There is also an important connection of *dokkaebi* to the red bean porridge. This dish is often used as an offering, a sacrificial food or scattered around the house to protect against evil spirits and to keep a bad luck away from the household. Thus, *dokkaebi* eating the porridge shows that they are not sheer ghosts or evil spirits. Displayed building of a reservoir may be a reason of *dokkaebi*'s connection to water and damp places.

The folktale that will be introduced first is called *Dokkaebi fire* (Chung 2014, 297). It tells a story of encountering *dokkaebi bul*, goblin fire or goblin light, the appearance of glimmering light or tall blue flames, that can lead to fainting. One rainy evening, when a voice called a person's name in the cemetery, that individual turned around to see a tall blue flame divided into ten vertical flames flashing up and down in a single column like lighting. The flames then leapt out of the column one by one, six in total, merging again into one. In another story, a man carrying meat was grabbed by the flames, and a *dokkaebi* challenged him to a wrestling match. If the *dokkaebi* won, the man would be left alone, but if he lost, the *dokkaebi* would take his meat. These narratives are different from others in

that they were and still are transmitted by people who allegedly had come upon these phenomena. The *dokkaebi* fire precedes the arrival of *dokkaebi*, and its dance of flames is said to stimulate the curiosity and imagination in agricultural communities. It is often interpreted as visual images born out of the communities' fears and the will to overcome them, bringing them pain but eventual joy. This story lays the greatest base for the visual representation of the creature in modern contemporary media. It became a tale-tell sign of the *dokkaebi* and is automatically associated with it (see chapters *Dokkaebi reference in the drama* and *Dokkaebi reference in the novel*).

The *Dokkaebi hat* (Chung 2014, 298) tells a story about the *dokkaebi gamtu*, or the goblin hat, the magical accessory which makes one's invisible while being worn. There was once a man who, by chance, comes into possession of a miraculous hat. The man walks around the village stealing other people's good after discovering that wearing the hat makes him invisible. However, one day passer-by's pipe burns the hat and left a hole there. The man's wife sews a piece of red fabric there to fill the hole and the man resumes his theft. Residents of the village detect that their belongings vanish whenever a piece of red fabric passes by, so one day they eagerly wait for the red fabric to appear and leap at it. The man's hat is yanked off and he gets beaten by the villagers as a punishment for his bad deeds. In this story a man's desire for supernatural powers is common among every culture around the world and is totally natural. In this narrative, however, the combination of acquiring such a power combined with immoral acts leads to a harsh punishment. This story is a good example of a story representing normative postulates and can be used as a material for early childhood education or included in children's literature.

The *Dokkaebi club* tale (Chung 2014, 298–299) tells a story of a good-hearted woodsman who happens upon a magical club that brings him riches, and a bad woodsman who gets punished. Scholar Lee Byong-gi in his book *Gungmunhakjeonsa (A Comprehensive History of Korean Literature 1957)*, that the tale was an influence for the classical novel *Heungbujeon (Tale of Heungbu)*. A good-hearted woodsman collects ginkgo nuts that have fallen to the ground while chopping wood in the forest. His grandfather and grandmother would get the first nut, his parents would get the second, his wife would get third, his children would get the fourth, and he would get the last one. It begins to rain suddenly, so he seeks cover inside a cabin, where he falls asleep. He awakes to loud noises

and discovers a partying group of *dokkaebi*. When one of the goblins pounds a club, piles of food and drinks appear. The woodsman becomes so hungry as he watches this that he grabs one of the ginkgo nuts and bites into it, making a cracking sound that scares the goblins and makes them flee. The good woodsman becomes wealthy after bringing home one of the magic clubs. When an evil-hearted neighbor, who is also a woodsman, hears about this, he comes over and asks how he got so rich, and the good woodsman tells him what happened. The greedy bad woodsman follows the good woodsman's directions to the area of the ginkgo nuts. They are fallen on the ground once more, and the evil woodsman scoops them up for himself. Then he rushes into the cabin and promptly falls asleep. The goblins gather at night and begin their party with food and drinks. The bad woodsman bites into the nut, and the goblins jump on him when they hear the cracking sound, claiming the man that tricked has returned. The bad woodsman was harshly beaten and was on the verge of death. Other variations of the tale include diverse punishments, some finishing by beating some even ending in death. There are two alluring points to this tale, one being the emphasis on the filial piety, and the other appearance of the *dokkaebi* in a group, as other narrative usually displays encounters with the *dokkaebi* as individuals not as a group and their powers manifesting thanks to their magic clubs. This story is one of the oldest amid *dokkaebi* narratives, and closest to folk tale conventions, excluding the emphasis on filial piety, an aspect that has been likely added in Joseon era, dominated by Confucian values. In this narrative the normative postulates are clearly displayed through the concept of filial piety and comparison of the two woodsmen standing against one another to contrast their values, pinpointing the other woodsman as an evil man of no virtue.

The narrative *Lady Dohwa and Bachelor Bihyeongnang* (Chung 2014, 311–312) follows a story of how a king's ghost visited his unrequited love *Dohwanyeo*, which leads to the birth of a *Bihyeongnang*. The story is situated in an era during the reign of Silla's 25th king Jinjiwang and is listed in *Samgugyusa* (*Memorabilia of Three Kingdoms*). The section on "Gyeongju District" of *Donggukkyeojiseungnam* (Augmented Survey of the Geography of the Eastern Kingdom) includes a record that "In Silla, after the appearance of Bihyeong, the worship of Duduri spread widely among the people of Gyeongju," Bihyeong here referring to *dokkaebi*. There is still present custom of chasing away ghosts in

Gyeongju by a pasted message reading, “House of *Bihyeongnang*, the son of the divine emperor.”

This story is regarded as the first documented shamanic myth that tell the story of the origin of *dokkaebi*. King Jinji is captivated by the beauty of Lady Dohwa of the district of Saryang during his lifetime and requests her to marry him, but she rejects because she is married. After the king’s death, who had stood down from the throne, and Lady Dohwa’s husband, the late king’s ghost visits Lady Dohwa for seven days before departing. Lady Dohwa then becomes pregnant and gives birth to Bihyeong near to the ending of her pregnancy. King Jipyong recognizes Bihyeong’s exceptional abilities and raises him in the palace, designating him as his *jipsa*, or a personal assistant. Bihyeong begins spending his evenings with a group of spirits on the hills west of the city near the Hwangjeon River, and the king orders Bihyeong to build a bridge, which Bihyeong and the spirits finish overnight and named it Guigyo, or Ghost Bridge. One of Bihyeong’s ghosts, Gildal, is recommended to the royal court by Bihyeong, and the king has one of his people who does not have a son adopt Bihyeong in as an adopted son. Gildal builds a city gate to the south of Heungryeun Temple and sleeps on top of it, earning the name Gildalmun. Bihyeong sent ghosts after Gildal who has transformed into a fox and vanished. Bihyeong orders ghosts to follow him and kill him. At that time people compose the song about Bihyeong and stick the lyrics to the door to keep the ghosts away.

This story portrays two events, one of *Bihyeongnang*’s origins and another about the display of his divine and supernatural powers. The combination of departed king’s spirit with a live mother denotes the merger of the underworld and the realm of the living, and Bihyeong, who was born between them, serves as a boundary and a medium between the two realms. In the realm of the living, Bihyeong’s purpose is to keep spirits under control, particularly through supervising goblins while they construct bridges and fortress gates, demonstrating the role of a builder god. This story is commonly interpreted as a shamanic myth about the origins of *dokkaebi*, as well as a proof of their existence. Displayed in this story are various aspects connected to *dokkaebi* and powers it possesses, one of them being the ability of metamorphosis, when a goblin changed into a fox. Another important part is its relation to shamanism, where Bihyeong serves a role of a shaman (*mudang*) and

connects the world of the living with the world of the dead. Furthermore, in this story again, *dokkaebi* appear only during the night and build diverse constructions as ordered.

#### 4. Visual history of *dokkaebi*

Since the Korean *dokkaebi* is a being introduced from the Korean oral folk tradition its visual representation is not that clear and there are many contradictory theories by various scholars. In this chapter, certain theories will be introduced. Mostly following the generally agreed upon visualization, but also some alternative theories will be shown.

Starting with a paragraph from *Encyclopedia of Korean Folk Beliefs* (2013).

*Dokkaebi* have horns, bulging eyes, a huge mouth, long, sharp teeth, a hairy body, and long claws, and are depicted in several ways, the most popular being roof tiles with *dokkaebi* designs. Although their looks have changed over time, nonetheless, they have always been regarded with terror and awe as protectors against evil spirits, wielding a variety of magical abilities while also being flawed and contradictory (Chung 2013, 155). This is the interpretation that is most regarded as the origin of *dokkaebi*'s visualization. This visual representation of the *dokkaebi* was used in the 1990s when the Korean government started its support of cultural policy strengthening *dokkaebi*'s image as a cultural and national motif.

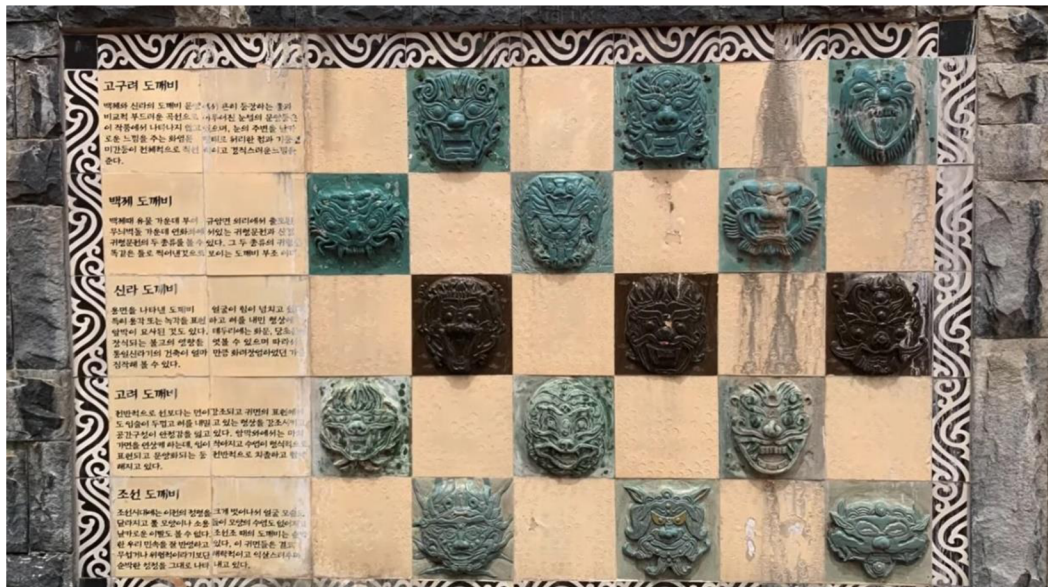


Fig. 1: Image of *dokkaebi* roof tiles through history

However, with that, there also arose some objection to its visual originality. In this regard a paper by Mikyung Bak, titled *The Originality of the Visualization of the Korean Dokkaebi, Through Comparison with the Japanese Oni in the 1990's* (2013) compiles diverse findings of several scholars and put them in a perspective. The first person to raise a doubt about *dokkaebi's* originality was Kim Kwang-eun, the then director of the National Folk Museum of Korea in *Hankyore Sinmun* (1995), stating the ambivalent representation of *dokkaebi* to that of Japanese *oni*. In *Dong-A Ilbo* (1995) the folklorist Ju Kang-hyeon, however, stated that the Korean *dokkaebi* is never cruel or vicious and differs from the Japanese *oni*. He also claimed that, unlike the Japanese *oni*, the Korean *dokkaebi* had two horns (Bak 2013, 2). With this the visuals of horns were at the center of discussion. This debate also going back to colonial period where the visual was put into schoolbooks and the two were often interchangeable. Then an opinion of Woo-bang Kang from the Art History Research Institute of Korea, regarding the upper mentioned roof tiles with an image of *dokkaebi*, is that *dokkaebi giwa*, the name of the monster-mask roof tile, is Japanese, and that the Korean roof tile design employs dragons as a theme rather than the *dokkaebi* (a ghost or a monster), therefore it should not be utilized as a reference for *dokkaebi* visualization. Heoh Seong-hi, on the other hand, claims that the monster-masks have Korean traits, citing the fact that monster-mask roof tiles are comparable across East Asia, but varied based on nations or epochs. Choe Gyeong-guk discusses the likelihood of a collaborative impact between Korea and Japan, concentrating on the fact that the Japanese *oni* is visualized utilizing monster masks and Buddhist deities (Bak 2013, 3–4). Bak Mkiyeong in his other paper *The Folktale "Hokpuri Yongkam" and the visual Representation of the Korean Dokkaebi* (2014), states the *dokkaebi's* well-known real depiction is extremely like the Japanese *oni*. The *oni* is a creature in Japanese folklore, like the Korean *dokkaebi* but very distinct in many ways (Bak 2014, 231). He also later introduces a fact, that it was historically prohibited to show demons or bad entities in art, because in Confucianism, which is the main philosophy of Korea, "men of virtue do not mention inconceivable things", so this created kind of a vacuum in terms of visual representation of *dokkaebi*. As a result, it would not be of a surprising that Japanese imagery would fill this void (Bak 2014, 235). In the end, however, it is a very complicated

topic that is not easy to pinpoint as there are diverging theories about the originality of the story, as well as the visual representation of the two beings.

The paper concludes stating that the common visual portrayal of the *dokkaebi* has been in use for more than fifty years, yet it is still challenged as being Japanese. A visual picture, on the other hand, is chosen and accepted organically, not by ideology. Trying to settle a discussion about the portrayal of the creature is a hard assignment. Eloquent is his last sentence: “I hope to one day see a new visualization for the *Dokkaebi* that embraces the possibilities of folk craft and art now being uncovered by diverse and careful researchers in a still-developing field” (Bak 2013, 6–7).

His hope seems to have come true as the globally popular drama *Guardian: The Lonely and Great God* (2016) showed the character of *dokkaebi* portrayed by Kong Yu. Physical depiction of the being took liberties and showed him as a regular human with few visual cues tying him the *dokkaebi* known from the folkloric tradition. For further discussion (See chapter *Image of dokkaebi in the drama*). Before the drama, though, there was a web comic series target at girls named *Dokkaebi Sinbu* (2004) published in Korean comic magazine *Heobeu* from 2004 to 2006 in six parts. Image of the *dokkaebi* in the comic series draws from the Buddhist motifs.

In today’s people’s memory when the name *dokkaebi* gets mentioned people tend to refer to the upper mentioned drama series and the image used in children literature of a foolish *dokkaebi* with a club in his hand. A quick internet search shows dominantly these two portrayals.

## **5. Goblin Mythology across the world**

Across many cultures around the world folklore is an inseparable part of any nation. They play a very important role in forming people’s beliefs and values. As people sought explanation to supernatural happenings or make sense of things are beyond human control, they create stories that got passed down to by generations and became a vital part of a community. As a result of this, there similar stories told by various cultures that could not have met and yet they created very comparable folkloric beings and narratives. Of course, even with the creature *dokkaebi*, a very important part of Korean folkloric tradition, regarded often as a symbol of Korea, there are creatures or being similar in their function or visuals found in other cultural traditions. In this chapter, creatures similar in their functions

or their visual will be briefly introduced. A being often referred to as a goblin, can be found across many cultures and is even a very popular character utilized in many contemporary works of fiction. Goblin, hobgoblin, kobold, ogre or a troll are just a few names these creatures bare, however, refer mostly to the same creature. They are tiny creatures with a human-like disposition, but they are considerably smaller and have horrifying, twisted features.

According to Annliya Shaijan in her research paper *Goblin Mythology: A Brief Study of the Archetype, Tracing the Explications in English Literature* (2019), the name goblin was used to describe any of the Fay's hideous, tiny, yet friendly brownie-like creatures. The knocker, kobold, sphookas, springgan, troll, and trow were later added to the list of subterranean creatures as well as fairies with a harmful and wicked aim. The term "goblin" dates from the fourteenth century and is said to be derived from Anglo-Norman *gobelin*, which is comparable to the Old French *gobelin*. In Germany, they were known as kobold. The name "goblin" refers to an unattractive fairy or devil (Shaijan 2019, 7).

Then there are the ancestors of Irish, Welsh and Scottish Celtic fairies called *Tuatha Dé Danann*. Their name, *Tuatha Dé Danann*, roughly translates from Gaelic to "People or Nation of the Goddess Danu". According to Irish folklorist W.B. Yeast's influential folklore collection *Fairy and Folk Tales of The Irish Peasantry* (2010), *Tuatha Dé Danann* were "trooping fairies", fallen angels who were not good enough to be saved, nor bad enough to be lost, the gods of the earth or gods of pagan Ireland. When they were no longer honored and offered sacrifices, they faded from public memory. Their nature being caprice, have their way of being good to the good and evil to the evil, having every charm but conscience. Being very easy to offend, so that one must not speak of them much, yet they are very easily pleased, they will do their best to protect one from misfortune if offered a little milk on the windowsill overnight (Yeast 2010, 2).

Also written in Annliya Shaijin's work is a brief introduction of Japanese *goblin* folklore tradition. These being called *tengu*, stating that they are said to be derived from Chinese legendary animals known as *t'ien-kou*, meaning "celestial dog". In the sixth and seventh century, these Chinese woodland monsters are thought to have arrived in Japan. *Tengu* were mountain dwellers who took on several shapes. The Japanese *goblins* were



known as *konoba tengu* because they resembled elderly men with long noses. People connected them with excellent crops because they traveled barefoot (Shaijan 2019, 8).

To show how these creatures are all similar we can analyze them by comparison to *dokkaebi*, in their function and visuals. The goblin from the Western traditions has very unappealing exterior that would be on par with the visual representation of *dokkaebi* on the roof tiles, as well as in today's media. When it comes to *Tuatha Dé Danann*, their duplicitous nature is the same as the nature of the Korean *dokkaebi* that can be of help to people when treated some food, as seen in a folk tale type *Dokkaebi reservoir*. We see this correlation in a need of honoring both beings and making offerings for them, otherwise they can be detrimental to the local community, or even be forgotten.

## **6. Korean supernatural serials**

South Korean television drama series have always usually centered their plot around ordinary, sometimes needlessly dramatized, day-to-day situations. Leading characters being normal people from all ways of life, some ultra-rich, some middle-class people and so on. However, at the beginning of 21. century producers start to include characters from out of this world often found in children's stories or those of folklore. Sung-Ae Lee prefaces in her work titled *Supernatural serials as social critique in recent South Korean television* (2019), that South Korean television drama has shifted to folklore and folkloric paranormal stories as a way to present of humor and social commentary in the 21. century. The fascination of the main protagonists in these drama series belonging to these folktale characters to audience is based on a similar script of alienation rooted in various types of loss of identity. The desire to reclaim a lost or misplaced identity is a recurring topic in South Korean television drama, and it responds to a societal and cultural worry about the meaning of life in an apparently hostile environment (Lee 2019, 61). The utilization of folkloric creatures in Korean cinema can be traced back to the early twentieth century with the advent of cinematography in Korea. The first purely Korean feature film, directed, produced, and financed by Korean was called *The Tale of Janghwa and Hongnyeon* (*Janghwa Hongnyeon jeon*) by Park Chung-hyeon in 1924 (Peirse and Martin 2013, 3). In the 21. century one big turning point may be the year 2008 and its significance stems from the KBS's (Korean Broadcasting System) choice to base the episodes of series called *Hometown Legends* (*Jeonseol ui gohyang*) on Korean myths and folktales. The first episode

*Return of the Gumiho (Gumiho ui gwihwan)* aired in August, presenting an exceptionally hostile female nine-tailed fox (Peirse and Byrne 2013, 45). This was the first monumental steppingstone for other drama series which started including traditionally Korean folktale beings into its main storyline. One thing to note is that the *Return of the Gumiho* episode and *Hometown Legends* series in general was in a horror genre. However, upcoming drama series follow the conventions of typical melodrama plotline.

In this regard, the drama series *Guardian: The Lonely and Great God* (2016-2017) that aired on the cable network tvN from 2 December 2016 to 21 January 2017, written by the popular drama writer Kim Eun-suk sticks to conventional melodrama tropes and storytelling. This drama is one of two central contemporary media that are of focus in this research. Its plot focuses on a love story and day-to-day struggles of Kim Sin, the nine hundred years old *dokkaebi* and Ji Eun-tak, a nineteen-year-old teenage girl, who was saved by a random act of kindness by Kim Shin when he saved her mother while she was pregnant with Eun-tak. When she is born, she has a mark on her neck signaling her being the *dokkaebi* bride. There are multiple story lines with other important characters (see chapter *Synopsis of the drama*). Eun-tak's repeating connection between *dokkaebi* and brooms foreshadows the serial's mythological innovations: in the folklore, things handled by people, such as brooms, can transform into *dokkaebi*. Her destiny as the *dokkaebi* bride is to draw the invisible blade that has been impaled on Kim Sin for 900 years and thus turn him into dust. (Lee 2019, 68) Thanks to this drama's great commercial success other drama series also decided to take inspiration from Korean folktale stories. Two noteworthy drama series are *The Tale of Nine Tailed (Gumihodyeon)* and *Bulgasal: Immortal Souls (Bulgasal)*. *The Tale of Nine Tailed* features a character of nine-tailed fox portrayed by an actor I Dong-uk, who previously portrayed a major character in the *Guardian: The Lonely and Great God* drama series. Important thing to note here is that this marks the first appearance of nine-tailed fox as a male in a drama series, as before nine-tailed fox was exclusively always a female. Taking some inspiration from the previously mention *dokkaebi* series it also tells a romantic story between a character of a male nine-tailed fox and a regular woman. In this drama series as well, the mythological innovation is apparent since the expectation of nine-tailed fox being a female character is subverted.

## 7. Commercialism of *dokkaebi*

The Korean *dokkaebi* since being established as the Korea's symbol and the national motif has understandably become an asset that can be capitalized on in terms of sales. It found its way into children's literature and textbooks as was mentioned before (see chapters *Definition of terms* and *Etymology of dokkaebi*), they are depicted there to provide ethical and normative education to children. Even in the drama *Guardian: The Lonely and Great God* (2016), only children's books are depicted as having a story about *dokkaebi* in them (see fig. 2).



Fig. 2: *Dokkaebi* books

Then there was the very popular comic series named *Dokkaebi Sinbu* (2004), that was mentioned in the *Visual history of dokkaebi* chapter. Its popularity among female readers was significant enough, that authors of the before mentioned drama adapted the *dokkaebi sinbu*, the goblin bride, trope into the drama's main plot. *Dokkaebi* in the comic series had its visual based on the Buddhist tradition.

Next come the biggest commercial success of the *dokkaebi* in recent years and that is the drama series *Guardian: The Lonely and Great God* (2016). The Korea Times states that "The drama is a huge success. Its popularity is reflected in a record-high TV commercial prices for the drama" (Park 2016). This was, however, also criticized as the drama had many products placements in many episodes, and the revenue according to Yonhap news reporter Yun Go-eun (2017), drew an estimated 2–4 billion KRW from

revenue (Yun 2017). Korean economy benefited in other fields too. Numerous filming sites of the drama became a hot tourist attraction, and tourists not only from Korea but also from overseas. For an example, according to *Korea Times* reporter Park Jin-hai (2017), in the famous scene, where Kim is accidentally summoned by Chi who blows out her birthday candles and makes a wish, with a buckwheat flower bouquet, a symbol for lovers. This site being the breakwaters in Jumunjin, Gangneung, where the drama series couple first met. Merchants rent a bouquet of flowers, a red scarf, and an umbrella, for 1000 KRW each, so that visitors can recreate their own romantic scene from the drama (Park 2017). This is just one example of many other places that benefited from this drama series.

According to the graph from Korea Citation Index website, the academic papers with topics connected to the Korean *dokkaebi* rose in popularity in the year 2016. (see fig. 3). The number of academic works rose from 15 in the year 2015 to 34 in 2017.



Fig. 3: Number of theses according to the year

After the tremendous success of the drama series, an up incoming girl group by the name *CLC* has come up with a new single named *Dokkaebi* in Korean, and an English name *Hobgoblin* in January of 2017. Similarly, to the drama series they have also taken an inspiration from the traditional folk narrative, especially the story of *Dokkaebi bangmangi*. They have adapted the folk song that accompanied the story, into their chorus.

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Original folk song:</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Isanghago areudaeun dokkaebi nara</i>  <i>Bangmangireul dudeurimyeon mueosi</i>  <i>doelkka</i>  <i>Geum nawara wara – ttuk ttak</i>  <i>Eun nawara wara – ttuk ttak</i></p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>English translation:</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;">Strange and beautiful, the <i>dokkaebi</i> 's world  What will happen when he waves his magic  club  Gold, come out- <i>ttuk ttak</i>  Silver, come out- <i>ttuk ttak</i></p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>CLC's chorus:</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Geum nawara wara (nope)</i>  <i>Eun nawara wara (nope)</i>  <i>Neo nawara wara</i>  <i>ttuk ttak Nice</i></p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>English translation:</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;">Gold, come out (nope)  Silver, come out (nope)  You, come out  <i>ttuk ttak Nice</i></p>

Apart from the adaptation of the folk song into their song's lyrics, one of the members called Yujin, supports a hairstyle, where her hair was braided into two horn-like fixtures. This shows the distinct two horns of the Korean *dokkaebi*. On top of that she wears a fur coat, making a reference to the furs that *dokkaebi* usually clothes itself with. In addition to that, in the first half of the music video Yujin, poses with a baseball bat, and in the later parts all the members are seen with the bat in their hands. Yujin (see fig. 4) with the iconic hairstyle and styled baseball bat in her hand.



Fig. 4: CLC, Hobgoblin Music Video

Another instance of *dokkaebi*'s representation in modern media would be the character codenamed “Dokkaebi” from a video game franchise called *Tom Clancy's Rainbow Six Siege*. It is the sixteenth installment in the Tom Clancy's Rainbow Six Franchise developed by Ubisoft Montreal and published by Ubisoft Entertainment. The game was released worldwide on 1 December 2015, with upgraded version of the game later releasing for the PlayStation 5 and Xbox Series X on 1 December 2020 (Rainbow Six Wiki 2022). The character in question, was introduced in the expansion named *Operation White Noise*, in the patch 2.4.0 on 5 December 2017. Grace Nam, Nam Eun-hye in Korean, codenamed “Dokkaebi”, is an operator featured in this game, of Korean heritage. Her in-game character has two characteristic short pigtailed reminiscent of the two horns the *dokkaebi* is often portrayed with (see fig. 5). The character's signature accessory is a small laptop with a sticker of her icon. The icon upon closer inspection, can be viewed as a modern rendition of the traditional visuals of *dokkaebi* as roof tiles (see fig. 6). It has the before mentioned two distinctive horns and sharp two teeth, linking it back to the historical depiction. However, style in general in very modern and took many artistic liberties with its portrayal of the *dokkaebi*.



Fig. 5: "Dokkaebi" from Tom Clancy's Rainbow Siege Six



Fig. 6: "Dokkaebi" icon from Tom Clancy's Rainbow Siege Six

An important part of the commercial use of *dokkaebi* imagery is his depiction on souvenirs in Korea. The historical image from the roof tiles can be found printed on many items, for examples a name cardholder and so on. Then there are cute plushies with two horns a few spiky teeth holding a club, sticking to the depiction from the tale type *Dokkaebi club*. The drama *Guardian: The Lonely and Great God* (2016), included some of these and skyrocketed their popularity. A new adaptation of the visual of the *dokkaebi*, can be seen in the scene where Euntak takes a selfie picture on her phone with a *dokkaebi* filter on through application Snow. Other instance would be the use of *dokkaebi*'s visuals in local establishments, such as restaurants.

In the last section of this chapter, *dokkaebi*'s or as it is referred to in the west *goblin*'s visuals in Western contemporary media will be discussed. Coming to Annliya Shaijan and her paper *Goblin Mythology: A Brief Study of the Archetype, Tracing the Explications in English Literature* (2019), states that myth of goblins has also been addressed in contemporary fiction.



Fig. 7: Goblin sign in Canada

Maureen McQuerry's *The Peculiars* (2012), William Aleander's *Goblin Secrets* (2012), Shona Husk's "Shadowland" series, Charles DeLindt's *Jack of Kinrowan* (1995) and Pamela Jane and Jane Manning's *Little Goblins Ten* (2011) all include a character of goblin. J.K. Rowling, one of the most popular authors of the twenty-first century, also included goblins into her "Harry Potter" series. The goblins in this series, while visually matching the folkloric goblins, are extremely different from conventional goblins, looking more like representations of dwarves with a focus on money and metal smithing. Rowling's portrayal of goblins, according to critics, is filled with real-world racial prejudices. In Hilari Bell's "Goblin Wood" trilogy, a twelve-year-old hedgewitch named Makenna joins forces with an army of cunning goblins. Both Western and Eastern comic books include goblins. In Marvel's *The Amazing Spiderman* (1964), the *Green Goblin* is revealed to be the Halloween-themed alter-ego of businessman Norman Osborn. Goblins have also made an appearance in recent films such as *The Princess and the Goblin*, *The Hobbit*, Ralph Bakshi's *Lord of the Rings*, and others. Goblins also feature as creatures in B-horror films such as *Trolls 2*, in which reviewers debate the troll-goblin dilemma. The film *Labyrinth* tells a story of *hobgoblins* (Shaijan 2019, 9).

From all this, the *dokkaebi*'s or goblin's relevance in Eastern or Western media and consciousness is still great. They adhere to the folklore traditions while also making some changes to help it fit into their narratives and forms of media. Especially, in the media of video games, there is a great potential to tell stories that are rooted in folklore tradition, in ways that are not possible in traditional media like television or books, since many newly released games have a kind of an in-game narration and build their own fictional folklore narratives.



## 8. Drama series *Guardian: The Lonely and Great God*

### 8.1. Synopsis of the drama

The first episode of the drama series starts with a narration describing the *dokkaebi* and how it comes to existence. There are camera shots showing blooded sword on the field of white flowers with a thunderstorm in the background. An importance of the *dokkaebi* finding his wife is also introduced to the audience and how it is present everywhere and nowhere at the same time and seemingly immortal. Then a scene of Gong-yu as Kim Sin, the *dokkaebi*, in past Paris helping a young Korean boy living there is shown. He tells the boy what to do and even lets him know the results of his upcoming test. Then once again back in the ancient times, depicted is how Kim Sin died and became the *dokkaebi*. Scenes in the first episode shift a lot from the present day to the past showing the viewer the *dokkaebi*'s powers and how he lived up until now. Later in the episode, we are shown how he randomly saves Eun-tak's life while she is still in her mother's womb. When the mother later gives birth to Eun-tak, ghosts are seen saying that the *dokkaebi* wife is back. Fast forward eight years, the mother is revealed to be a ghost taking care of the young Eun-tak and eventually having to go to the realm of the dead. Grim reaper appears, portrayed by I Dong-uk, and tries to take little Eun-tak away as she was not supposed to be born, but is saved by the old woman whom her mother was closed with from before. This old woman in the later episodes turns out to be *Samsin*, the Goddess of childbirth. Then the story skips again showing the teenage Eun-tak, living with her mean aunt randomly meeting Kim Sin on the street, but the two just pass past each other. We are shown how Eun-tak can see and communicate with ghosts. When she celebrates her birthday by herself by the seashore, she blows candles and wishes, making Kim Sin suddenly appear out of thin air holding a buckwheat flower bouquet. Both are surprised by this, and Eun-tak calls him her genie. They interact some more she addresses Kim Sin as *dokkaebi* and tells him she is supposed to be the *dokkaebi*'s wife according to ghosts. But he dismisses her until she follows him through a random door in Korea, teleporting to Canada, a thing a simple human is not supposed to be able to do. Then a house where Kim Sin resides is show together with his nephew, who is supposed to serve Sin, but lavishes in luxury lifestyle instead. Grim reaper moves into to the house as the nephew leased the house thinking Sin is going to leave Korea. This makes them two, the *dokkaebi* and the grim reaper, housemates. Sin later tries to explain to Eun-tak that she cannot be his bride since she does not see a certain thing about him, she is supposed to see. This leads Eun-tak to study about *dokkaebi* creatures in

the library, using children's literature. Sin showcases some of his fire, like being protected by blue flames, being able to teleport freely or summoning piles of gold when drunk. Eun-tak's mean aunt tries to get a money book, where her mother saved all the money for her, from Eun-tak, but she does not know anything about it. The aunt even hires gangsters to abduct Eun-tak, but she is eventually saved by Sin and the grim reaper, with the two gangsters being punished by grim reaper who makes them forget everything and fight among the two forever. Sin then punishes the aunt and her two children by spawning two gold bricks, making them fight among each other for them. They end up in jail as they try to exchange them for money, for these were stole. Sin with Eun-tak keep getting closer, viewers being introduced to his various powers, like seeing strangers' past and punishing them for their misdeeds. Viewers are also introduced to the potential second pairing of the drama and that being between the grim reaper and the owner of the BBQ restaurant, who we later get to know is called Sunny. Sin's flashbacks to the past, showing how he burned the palace down after being revived as the *dokkaebi* and finding his little sister dead. Eun-tak eventually reveals that she sees the sword stuck in Sin's chest.

Sin gets depressed as Eun-tak, turns out to be the bride and may be able to break the curse and as a result end his immortality, killing him. The two then get teleported to Canada again where they spend some time and Eun-tak tells him what she has learnt about him from the available literature about the club, him helping or punishing people and summoning gold. He corrects her by summoning sword out of water, stating that people often misinterpreted it as a club, and teleports around by leaving a blueish smoke behind. While they are at a restaurant in Canada Sin gets a vision of Eun-tak in the future, where she sits in the exact same restaurant and waits for some man that does not seem to be him. The two then continue with their lives, meeting time to time, until when Eun-tak tries to pull out the sword she finds out she is unable to do so even when she sees it. Viewers witness other abilities that Sin possesses like levitation, telekinesis and so on. Eventually, after Sin and Eun-tak grow closer together and develop feelings for each other, Eun-tak tries to pull the sword again and it starts going out, this however, frightens Sin who stops her launching her in the air, but saving her at the last moment. In the background, the side story of the grim reaper and Sunny continues, the grim reaper growing desperate as he does not remember his past life for which he is punished by being a grim reaper.

Due to the fates will, Sin and Eun-tak cannot simply ignore the sword and live happily together, because it would result in Eun-tak's death. The grim reaper helps them by revealing

death notices when she is going to die, and Sin prevents this. However, *Samsin*, the Goddess of Childbearing, warns him that this is not a solution, and he needs to die to protect her. Eun-tak after finding out that pulling the sword would mean death for Sin, decides to leave Sin and hides from him for some time, although, he finds her when she nearly had an accident at work. The two, start living together again and Eun-tak goes to university.

Through more flashbacks to the past to the Goryeo period, the fact Sin, the grim reaper and Sunny are not just random strangers to each other but have been closely related in their past lives is revealed. Sunny was Sin's little sister, who was killed by king's order for betraying him for defending her brother, and the grim reaper was the king, by the name Wangyeo, to whom Sin's little sister was wed to and who ordered both Sin's and his sister's death under the influence of his advisor Bak Jung-heon. The advisor becoming an evil spirit after being killed by Sin in the past. Sin tries to fight him, but his sword does him no harm. Eventually, Eun-tak must pull the sword out of Sin's chest, the sword changing his flame color from blue to regular red. After defeating Bak Jung-heon, Sin turns into dust and disappears leaving Eun-tak alone. Everything Sin has written has disappears together with people's memories of him. Eun-tak writes down his name in the last moment before forgetting him. Sin appears in a limbo where he wanders endlessly for what seems like an eternity. Ten years pass in real world, Eun-tak becoming a radio show producer. When she celebrates her birthday alone, like she did 10 years ago and blows candles on her birthday cake, Sin suddenly gets teleported to her from the limbo, but she does not recognize him. Sin seeks out the grim reaper, but he seems to not remember him either, but eventually, he does. The same goes for Sunny since she got to know her past life thanks to the grim reaper before.

Sin keeps trying to meet Eun-tak, but she thinks of him only as a creep. He helps her with her radio program as he is still a head of the big company, and she agrees to meet him for dinner. She goes to Canada to collect her memories she for unknown reason lost, and bumps by chance into Sin there. The two go for dinner in the restaurant they used to visit together before. Here the Sin's previous vision comes true, and he is the man he saw before. Eun-tak's memory return and they seem to live a happy life, until Eun-tak decides to save lives of many kindergarten children, by blocking a huge truck with her own car with her still in it. Sin is unable to save her, and she dies. He lives alone for many years, thinking about Eun-tak, going to Canada often to the places

they visited together. When suddenly one day, a high school senior approaches him in Canada, turning out to be the reincarnated Eun-tak.

## 8.2. Drama review

The drama *Guardian: The Lonely and Great God* (2016-2017) that aired on the cable network TvN from 2 December 2016 to 21 January 2017, written by a popular drama writer Kim Eun-suk. The story centers around the struggles and love story between the *dokkaebi* portrayed by Gong Yu, and teenage girl Ji Eun-tak, portrayed by Kim Go-eun. Also important is the second pair of the grim reaper portrayed by I Dong-uk, and BBQ restaurant owner Sunny portrayed by Yu In-na. It has sixteen episodes, however, episode fourteen was postponed and a special episode was aired in its time slot.

The first few episodes focus on the worldbuilding and introduction of characters' back stories. A lot of period scenes are shown as the viewers get to know how Kim Sin became the *dokkaebi* in Goryeo era. Then Eun-tak and her mother become the focus, showing why and how Eun-tak got her powers of seeing ghost and how her mother died and was saved by the *dokkaebi*. Once these two characters get properly fleshed out, they are immediately thrown together, and their complicated relationship path begins. Eun-tak tries to prove she is the *dokkaebi* bride, Kim Sin does not believe her, although once she proves that she sees his sword, the two are already in love and Sin does not want to leave her alone. This goes on for the whole first half of the drama. One complaint that can be raised is the pacing of these episodes. They are slow and include a lot of romantic scenes in slow motion with romantic OST going with it. These scenes really drag a lot of time and are even sometimes repeated as they are shown before commercial breaks. On the other hand, some view these as being poetic in nature and helping the drama portray the emotional weight of the scene. This is contrasted with the second half of the drama where a lot of important things happened very suddenly and one after the other. Some happenings were not given enough time and were thrown on after the other. Especially, the arch enemy the ghost advisor, was present in the last few episodes, while he could have been gradually introduced, bit by bit, or at least hinted to be a ghost from earlier episodes. The same goes for the pairing of the grim reaper and Sunny. Although, they have more airtime, their story could have had more time and details put into it.

Interesting, is the topic of bromance in this drama. Bromance, referring to a very close, affectionate but non-sexual relationship between two or more male characters. In this case, between Kim Sin, the *dokkaebi* and the grim reaper, the former king Wangyeo. Since they become roommates from the beginning, the audience gets to see them living a regular day to day life together. They cook together, eat, do each other's laundry, and even share their hardships together. Some viewers claim, it is not present in the drama or just that the other party is making it up, while other group of viewers go as far as claim that the writers put it in there intentionally.

Cinderella complex is likewise talked about regarding this drama. The lead female character Eun-tak, is always relaying on Kim Sin to save her from any kind of danger she finds herself in. She always carries matches with her as blowing a fire makes Sin teleport to her in an instant. Although, she saves the children in the end all by sacrificing herself, throughout the whole drama she heavily relied on the help of the *dokkaebi*.

### **8.3. Themes of the drama**

The story of the drama revolves around two main themes. The first being desperation for normal life and the second being, breaking free from fate, what was given to one or is expected of one's life to be. There are also some smaller ones, but they are not central to the main plot, for example, sense of alienation in a relationship, regret of the past, wealth disparity and sense of disconnect among siblings.

Sin never really asked to be turned into the *dokkaebi*. He wanted a normal and prosperous life for his little sister and lived to protect his country of Goryeo. When he was betrayed by his king and killed, which resulted in his revival as the *dokkaebi*, he spends his time trying to find his bride that would end this curse. However, after he meets Eun-tak, his bride, and the two grow closer together, his mindset changes and he does everything in his powers to stay and live together with her as normally as possible. Problems arise when *Samsin* tells him that the bride needs to pull out the stuck sword, otherwise she will be in danger. Such scenarios repeat a bit, and this theme starts to slowly blend in with the second one, breaking free of fate and or predispositions given to the one.

Sin, as well as Eun-tak, try to break free from the fate of being the *dokkaebi* and the *dokkaebi's* bride respectively. Sin, after growing fond of Eun-tak, does everything he can to try and live as normal life as he can with her. With the help from the grim reaper, who gives him

death reports of Eun-tak, he saves her every time, however, in the end all is futile and she must pull out the sword and unmake him. Similarly, the grim reaper tries hard to remember his past life, for which he was punished by becoming the grim reaper. After falling in love with a human, the BBQ restaurant owner Sunny, he also misuses his powers to fight his punishment and fate of being the grim reaper. In both cases, what had to be done happened, however, they both got the second chance in their new lives where they meet their loved ones once more.

Wealth is likewise an interesting topic of this drama, although it was never directly talked about. When Kim Sin gets introduced in the current timeline, he lives in a big mansion with many luxurious items in there, wears full luxury brand outfits and eats online in expensive restaurants or prepares meals from expensive ingredients, such as beef and so on. His servant, or as he is regarded to more often, the Chairman and his grandson Deok-hwa, live to serve the *dokkaebi*, and are also higher ups in a big conglomerate company owned also by the *dokkaebi*. Since *dokkaebi* is innately connected to wealth from the folkloric tale types such as the *Dokkaebi club*, there is no surprise to Sin's lavish lifestyle. However, his servants benefit from this too. This can be interpreted as the richest being more than just regular people. When compared to the houses or apartments and living conditions of people like, Eun-tak's aunt or the man who the Sin saved, huge differences can be seen. Displaying the massive wealth distribution gaps in Korean society.

Relationship problems also play a big role in the drama. Sense of alienation can be felt between Sin and Eun-tak when he does not know what she likes or would like to get in the beginning of their relationship. Similarly, in the flashbacks to the past Sin and his little sister have a beautiful sibling relationship, however, as he fights for the nation, they do not have enough time to spend together, and a level of sadness and disdain can be felt from his sister towards him because of that. Or when Sin meets his former general, reincarnated in today's era, he feels regrets for leading them towards death, and repays him by hiring him and provides him with incredible work benefits such as an apartment or a company car.

#### 8.4. Table of *dokkaebi* appearances in the drama *Guardian: The Lonely and Great God*

Ep. No.	Time stamp	Content	Category
1.	1:12	Image of blooded sword	image of <i>dokkaebi</i> A
			<i>dokkaebi</i> reference F
	3:15	Kim Sin helps a boy in Paris	duplicitous nature
			<i>dokkaebi</i> reference C
		Kim Sin as <i>dokkaebi</i>	image of <i>dokkaebi</i> B
	6:04	Twitching blooded sword	shamanism
			<i>dokkaebi</i> reference F
	23:30	Kim Sin addressed as <i>dokkaebi</i> by grim reaper	name of <i>dokkaebi</i>
	24:20	Lights turning on by themselves	magical powers
	33:30	Fireflies flying from Sin's hand	magical powers
	35:08	Sailor addresses Kim Sin as <i>dokkaebi</i>	name of <i>dokkaebi</i>
	36:28	Blade appears in Kim Sin's hand, but he does not help sailors	duplicitous nature
	37:30	Kim Sin hears every plea but does not help	duplicitous nature
	37:55	Kim Sin saves woman's life as she begs to save her unborn child	duplicitous nature
	55:50	Kim Sin ignores plea from his nephew	duplicitous nature
	1:08:00	Kim Sin gets teleported to Eun-tak	magical powers
		Kim Sin is holding <i>maemilkkot</i>	shamanism
	1:13:40	Kim Sin burns document with his mind	magical powers
	1:21:24	<i>Kim Sin</i> : "blue fire is the hottest kind of fire"	<i>dokkaebi</i> reference A
	1:22:28	Eun-tak addresses <i>Kim Sin</i> as <i>dokkaebi</i>	name of <i>dokkaebi</i>
1:25:30	Eun-tak is teleported to Canada with Sin through a door	magical powers	
2.	4:41	Goblin sign in Canada	image of <i>dokkaebi</i> C
	14:50	Sword glows with blue flames	<i>dokkaebi</i> reference B
	20:40	Kim Sin teleports from Canada to Korea ( <i>Namdaemun</i> )	magical powers
	24:20	Teleportation to a meadow	magical powers
	41:43	Grim reaper sings a children <i>dokkaebi</i> song	image of <i>dokkaebi</i> C
	43:42	Kim Sin summoning gold when drunk	<i>dokkaebi</i> reference B
	44:02	Kim Sin levitates above bed	magical powers
	51:35	Kim Sin summoning lighting to scare the grim reaper	magical powers
	58:01	Eun-tak studying about <i>dokkaebi</i> - all are children's books	image of <i>dokkaebi</i> C
	1:00:55	Kim Sin is protected by blue flames	<i>dokkaebi</i> reference A
	1:02:21	Kim Sin tying his nephew to a shelf in an instant	magical powers

	1:12:22	Kim Sin bragging about having a lot of gold and money	<i>dokkaebi</i> reference B
	1:13:31	Kim Sin levitating cutlery	magical powers
	1:15:08	Kim Sin saving Eun-tak	duplicitous nature
		Turning off streetlights	magical powers
3.	4:05	Sword glowing with blue flames	<i>dokkaebi</i> reference A
	7:05	Kim Sin punishing gangsters	duplicitous nature
	13:10	Kim Sin punishes of Eun-tak 's aunt and cousins by spawning gold	duplicitous nature
			<i>dokkaebi</i> reference B
	22:19	Poster about legend of <i>dokkaebi</i>	image of <i>dokkaebi</i> A
	22:27	Use of <i>dokkaebi</i> in various businesses	image of <i>dokkaebi</i> A
	25:51	children book about <i>dokkaebi</i>	image of <i>dokkaebi</i> C
	33:10	Kim Sin 's skin smokes when called by Eun-tak	<i>dokkaebi</i> reference A
	35:30	Kim Sin granting Eun-tak 's wish	duplicitous nature
			<i>dokkaebi</i> reference C
	39:20	Kim Sin playing tricks on two people in a café	duplicitous nature
			<i>dokkaebi</i> reference B
	41:10	Kim Sin punishing them as they turn up to be bad people	duplicitous nature
			<i>dokkaebi</i> reference B
52:00	Blue flames around Kim Sin's body	<i>dokkaebi</i> reference A	
1:12:00	It starts to rain because Kim Sin is sad	magical powers	
1:20:57	Eun-tak sees the blade that is stuck in Kim Sin's chest	<i>dokkaebi</i> reference B	
4.	16:20	Raining because Kim Sin is depressed	magical powers
	22:28	Eun-tak family's loss of memory	magical powers
			duplicitous nature
	29:00	Kim Sin meets a man who he helps when he was a boy in Paris	magical powers-immortality
	31:43	<i>Kim Sin</i> 's skin smokes when called by Eun-tak	<i>dokkaebi</i> reference A
	39:46	Flowers bloom in winter because Kim Sin is happy	magical powers
	50:24	Kim Sin and Eun-tak get teleported to Canada by car	magical powers
	52:35	Kim Sin is 939 years old	magical powers
	54:17	Eun-tak speaks about her research about <i>dokkaebi</i>	<i>dokkaebi</i> reference F
	55:07	Eun-tak says that Kim Sin should summon pile of gold with his bat	<i>dokkaebi</i> reference B
55:30	Kim Sin summons his sword from water	<i>dokkaebi</i> reference B	
		<i>dokkaebi</i> reference F	
55:58	Kim Sin teleports leaving blue flames	<i>dokkaebi</i> reference A	
5.	14:18	Kim Sin boils an egg in a hand with blue flames	<i>dokkaebi</i> A
	18:32	Kim Sin blows candles by force of will	magical powers
	20:50	It starts to rain because Kim Sin is sad	magical powers
	33:10	Kim Sin playing games with grim reaper	<i>dokkaebi</i> reference F



		Levitating knives	magical powers
	37:39	<i>Dokkaebi</i> plushy and his name Mr. Buckwheat	image of <i>dokkaebi</i> C
	1:04:20	Kim Sin sees future of Eun-tak	magical powers
6.	5:20	<i>Dokkaebi</i> plushy and his name Mr. Buckwheat	image of <i>dokkaebi</i> C
	25:00	Kim Sin tell Eun-tak lottery numbers	magical powers
			duplicitous nature
	40:42	Kim Sin: "I can see a person's fortune at the very least."	magical powers
	41:50	Kim Sin helps people according to his whim	duplicitous nature
	1:08:56	Kim Sin was buried in the buckwheat field	shamanism
	1:11:46	Kim Sin makes it snow	magical powers
	1:12:53	Eun-tak asks Kim Sin if he is going to change into a broomstick	<i>dokkaebi</i> reference F
	7.	4:35	Kim Sin makes snow freeze in the air
21:37		Kim Sin teleports Eun-tak to school through a random door	magical powers
22:18		Kim Sin foresees a man's death	magical powers
25:18		Kim Sin teleports to Eun-tak because she blew a candle	magical powers
37:38		Kim Sin conjures a thunderstorm	magical powers
39:54		Kim Sin takes Eun-tak's cake by force of will	magical powers
43:38		Kim Sin lost a bet with a small boy in baseball and granted him a wish	<i>dokkaebi</i> reference F
45:01		Kim Sin burns sprouts with his mind	magical powers
47:25		Kim Sin is referred to as a broomstick by Eun-tak	<i>dokkaebi</i> reference F
59:59		Conglomerate company belongs to Kim Sin	<i>dokkaebi</i> reference B
1:01:43		Kim Sin questions ghost about Eun-tak	<i>dokkaebi</i> reference E
1:11:00		Kim Sin teleports to catch Eun-tak with blue flames around him	<i>dokkaebi</i> reference A
8.		25:39	Kim Sin stops a random man from committing suicide and gives him a sandwich
	36:03	Kim Sin gest angry and we can hear a thunder	magical powers
	36:09	Kim Sin brings back Tae-hui's piano	magical powers
	41:00	Kim Sin sees a future potential accident	magical powers
	43:50	Kim Sin teleports by going through random doors	magical powers
	45:13	Kim Sin grabs a bicycle by force of will	magical powers
	48:02	Kim Sin prevents deaths of many people	magical powers
	49:02	Young grim reaper is surprised by Kim Sin's visuals (expected an ogre)	image of <i>dokkaebi</i> B
	1:03:40	The sword is Kim Sin's blessing and a punishment	<i>dokkaebi</i> reference F
9.	6:32	It rains because Kim Sin is sad	magical powers
	7:43	Kim Sin uses doors to teleport	magical powers
	8:12	Kim Sin interrogates ghosts	<i>dokkaebi</i> reference E

	10:30	Kim Sin sees Sunny's future	magical powers
	16:30	Appearance of blood moon and mist in Seoul	magical powers
	17:40	Card of death is burnt	<i>dokkaebi</i> reference A
	20:30	Chairman's assistant was chosen and guarded by <i>dokkaebi</i>	<i>dokkaebi</i> reference C
	40:28	Blue flames appear as he opens the garage to save Eun-tak	<i>dokkaebi</i> reference A
	59:50	Kim Sin pays for Eun-tak tuition	<i>dokkaebi</i> reference C
	1:08:41	Eun-tak: " <i>Dokkaebi</i> is scared of chicken blood, I read it."	shamanism
10.	14:16	All Kim Sin can do is see other people's future	magical powers
	36:32	Kim Sin teleports through the door	magical powers
	54:50	Kim Sin is fighting thugs with a broomstick	<i>dokkaebi</i> reference F
	57:14	Kim Sin freezes time	magical powers
	1:07:02	Kim Sin teleports to Canada through a door	magical powers
	1:08:50	Kim Sin is playing <i>Baduk</i>	<i>dokkaebi</i> reference F
11.	4:44	Use of salt to purify ghosts	shamanism
	20:28	Sunny: "It seems as if you lived since back then"	magical powers
	35:52	Kim Sin starts getting his powers as <i>dokkaebi</i> in late Joseon. Sees people's future	magical powers
	41:38	Eun-tak tells Shin to open the door. - teleportation	magical powers
	54:17	Kim Sin skin smokes = teleports to Eun-tak	magical powers <i>dokkaebi</i> reference A
	1:07:00	Kim Sin slashes a man with his sword with blue flames	<i>dokkaebi</i> reference A
	1:07:48	Kim Sin makes the man to confess of killing his wife	duplicitous nature
12.	7:02	Kim Sin boils an egg in a hand with blue flames	<i>dokkaebi</i> reference A
	8:20	Kim Sin grabs Eun-tak's notebook with a force of will	magical powers
	26:03	Sees other people die as a part of being immortal	magical powers
	28:38	Kim Sin says: "geum nawara ttuk ttak haejulkka?"	<i>dokkaebi</i> reference B
	31:31	Chairman describes Kim Sin: "Man who disappears with a blue flame."	<i>dokkaebi</i> reference A
	36:50	Eun-tak uses <i>dokkaebi</i> Snow filter	image of <i>dokkaebi</i> C
	40:20	Kim Sin repays his former soldier (in past life) with good work, apartment and money	duplicitous nature <i>dokkaebi</i> reference C
	41:22	Kim Sin teleports to Eun-tak after she blew a match	magical powers
	43:31	Kim Sin says: " <i>Dokkaebi</i> recognize people with potential."	magical powers
	1:11:07	Kim Sin searches for a ghost from a rooftop	<i>dokkaebi</i> reference E
	1:12:40	Detail on the hilt of the sword with <i>dokkaebi</i> image	image of <i>dokkaebi</i> A
		They fight in dark and damp/wet alley	<i>dokkaebi</i> reference F
	1:12:48	Blue flames appear on the sword	<i>dokkaebi</i> reference A

		Ghost says the sword was molded from water	<i>dokkaebi</i> reference F
13.	14:14	Kim Sin was presented with the <i>dokkaebi</i> sword by the king in Goryeo era	image of <i>dokkaebi</i> A shamanism
	14:50	Grim reaper wears black het to be invisible	<i>dokkaebi</i> reference D
	21:25	Eun-tak drawing a hilt of the sword with <i>dokkaebi</i> image	image of <i>dokkaebi</i> A
	25:54	Drawn picture of <i>dokkaebi</i> sword	image of <i>dokkaebi</i> A
	43:32	Eun-tak says that Sin became <i>dokkaebi</i> because world needs “isanghago areumdaun” miracles	image of <i>dokkaebi</i> C
	44:58	Eun-tak’s birth mark protects her against a bad spirit with bright blue light	<i>dokkaebi</i> reference A
			duplicitous nature
	54:01	Thunder appears as Shin is planning a fight	magical powers
	1:00:47	Kim Sin summons a gust of wind to protect a little boy	magical powers
	1:10:14	Kim Sin disappears in blue flames	<i>dokkaebi</i> reference A
	1:10:45	Kim Sin fights Bak Jung-heon in a dark place	<i>dokkaebi</i> reference F
	1:11:08	Eun-tak reads a <i>dokkaebi</i> children book	image of <i>dokkaebi</i> C
	1:11:15	Eun-tak holds a buckwheat bouquet	shamanism
	1:13:48	Bak Jung-heon is grabbed by blue flames	<i>dokkaebi</i> reference A
	1:14:06	Eun-tak grabs the blade of the sword and is cut with blood on the sword It disappears with blue flames	shamanism
			<i>dokkaebi</i> reference A
1:15:01	Possessed Eun-tak pulls the sword from Kim Sin with her blooded hands	shamanism	
1:15:36	Sword with blue flames stuck in Kim Sin	<i>dokkaebi</i> reference A	
Sp. Ep.	1:00	Kim secretary teleports with blue flames	<i>dokkaebi</i> reference A
	24:27	Kim secretary holds a black hat	<i>dokkaebi</i> reference D
14.	25:10	Eun-tak blows a candle and Kim Sin’s skin smokes again	<i>dokkaebi</i> reference A
		Kim Sin is teleported to her	magical powers
	34:20	Kim Sin comments on grim reaper's hat	<i>dokkaebi</i> reference D
	40:22	Kim Sin leaves by an entry door and teleports to an upstairs room	magical powers
	42:02	Kim Sin changes weather according to Eun-tak 's mistake in broadcast	magical powers
	43:48	Kim Sin teleports to Eun-tak because she blew a candle	magical powers
	46:29	Kim Sin repeatedly asks reaper for money to repay someone	<i>dokkaebi</i> reference F
	47:25	Reaper says to Kim Sin: "yetnal saenggakhaeso geum nawara ttuk ttak an doenda.”	<i>dokkaebi</i> reference B
	47:49	Kim Sin teleports to Deok-hwa's house while it rains	magical powers
<i>dokkaebi</i> reference F			

	48:43	Blue flames around Kim Sin's body	<i>dokkaebi</i> reference A
	52:40	Kim Sin helps Eun-tak get a contract with his company for advertisement	duplicitous nature
	1:03:14	Kim Sin teleports to Eun-tak because she blew a candle	magical powers
	1:12:47	Kim Sin teleports to Canada through a door	magical powers
15.	3:14	Kim Sin teleporting to various countries (Japan, Russia, France, Egypt)	magical powers
	4:14	Kim Sin says that mummy told him it also lived a long time	magical powers
	13:18	Kim Sin's vision of Eun-tak future	magical powers
	30:14	Goblin sign in Canada	image of <i>dokkaebi</i> C
	32:39	Kim Sin teleports to Eun-tak because she blew a candle	magical powers
	36:17	Kim Sin opens a fridge with his mind	magical powers
	37:23	Kim Sin is regarded as a god of wealth	<i>dokkaebi</i> reference C
	39:56	Kim Sin teleports him and Eun-tak through an airport door home	magical powers
	47:24	Kim Sin teleports to Eun-tak because she blew a candle	magical powers
	51:01	Kim Sin sees Sunny's future	magical powers
	52:35	Deok-hwa talking about blue flames coming from Kim Sin's body	<i>dokkaebi</i> reference A
	53:30	Kim Sin levitates a pan	magical powers
	1:01:43	Flowers bloom in winter because Kim Sin is happy	magical powers
16.	5:48	Kim Sin cuts woman's bag with a gesture	magical powers duplicitous nature
	6:49	Restaurant logo	image of <i>dokkaebi</i> A
	29:04	Eun-tak gets a buckwheat bouquet	shamanism
	29:51	Kim Sin and Eun-tak 's wedding in buckwheat field	shamanism
	30:23	Kim Sin opening fridge with his mind	magical powers
	47:53	Kim Sin burns a letter with a blue flame coming from his hand	<i>dokkaebi</i> reference A
	48:49	Very long rain season because Kim Sin was sad	magical powers
	49:01	<i>Dokkaebi</i> image on a towel	image of <i>dokkaebi</i> A
	1:00:11	Buckwheat field	Shamanism
	1:01:09	Man offers half a sandwich to Kim Sin	<i>dokkaebi</i> reference C
	1:02:00	Kim Sin repays the man with an employment (tells him where to go and that someone will need his help there)	duplicitous nature <i>dokkaebi</i> reference C

Table 1: Table of *dokkaebi* appearances in the drama *Guardian: The Lonely and Great God*

### 8.5. Generalization of *dokkaebi* appearances in the drama

Generalization	Number of appearances
Image of <i>dokkaebi</i>	21
<i>Dokkaebi</i> reference	66
Shamanism	12
Magical powers	76
Name of <i>dokkaebi</i>	3
Duplicitous nature	21

Table 2: Generalization of *dokkaebi* appearances in the drama

### 8.6. *Dokkaebi* reference in the drama

<i>Dokkaebi</i> reference	Folk Narrative	Number of occurrences
Reference A	<i>Dokkaebi fire</i>	26
Reference B	<i>Dokkaebi club</i>	9
Reference C	<i>Dokkaebi reservoir</i>	8
Reference D	<i>Dokkaebi hat</i>	3
Reference E	<i>Lady Dohwa and Bachelor Bihyeong</i>	3
Reference F	General beliefs	15

Table 3: *Dokkaebi* reference in the drama

Writers and producer of this drama, as can be seen in a Table 4., were inspired a lot by the traditional folklore narrative of the *dokkaebi*. These were utilized, not only by certain functions the *dokkaebi* has in them, but as well the visual cues were adapted. The most portrayed feature of the *dokkaebi* in the drama was the signature blue flame that accompanied Sin, originating in the folkloric tale type *Dokkaebi fire*. There, the *dokkaebi* simply had the form of the blue flames or flashing lights, and authors of the drama enhanced Sin's visuals when using supernatural powers with blueish flames forming around his body. Then general beliefs in context of the *dokkaebi* were showcased, for example, the image of blooded sword and how he was transformed by it, or from Eun-tak's research on the *dokkaebi* she tells it likes damp, dark places, Sin enjoys playing hazardous games and makes bets with other people. Eun-tak also many times joked how he must have been a broomstick before, referring to a belief that *dokkaebi* are created by spirits possessing basic household items (Chung 2013). Interesting iteration of the original folkloric narrative can be seen regarding the tale type of *Dokkaebi club*. Writers took their liberty and adapted it as a sword that Sin uses to fight. He even himself states that people confuse in with a club, thus the narrative was created around a club. The tale type of *Dokkaebi reservoir* had a striking effect on the *dokkaebi* known today. *Dokkaebis* in the story helped build a reservoir after

being given an offering and this is where the belief of *dokkaebi* helping people originates in. In the drama those are all the instances when Sin helped out Eun-tak or other people, for example paid Eun-tak's tuition, or helped the little boy in Paris and so on. For the tale type of *Dokkaebi hat*, writers were very liberal and gave this power of invisibility to the grim reaper instead of the *dokkaebi*. By putting on a formal black hat he instantly becomes invisible. However, the *dokkaebi* never utilizes it in the drama. When it comes to Sin's ability to speak and interrogate ghosts, the tale type of Lady *Dohwa* and Bachelor *Bihyeong* may have been an inspiration. Bachelor *Bihyeong*, since being born from a union of a human mother and a spirit of a king possessed an ability of communicating with ghosts and *dokkaebi*. Sin can be seen few times interrogating ghosts about Eun-tak's whereabouts.

### 8.7. Magical powers of *dokkaebi* in the drama

Magical powers	Number of appearances
weather changes	13
telekinesis	10
teleportation	24
foresight	11
other	19

Table 4: Magical powers in the drama

In this part various instances when the protagonist Kim Sin, the *dokkaebi* displayed any form of supernatural powers will be analyzed. These have varying effects and are not directly tied to the before mentioned *dokkaebi* stories from *Encyclopedia of Korean Folklore and Traditional Culture Vol. 3: Encyclopedia of Korean Folk Literature* (Chung 2014), which are used as the source for this thesis. Supernatural powers are divided into groups and categorized according to their effect and purpose. Those are as followed: weather manipulation, telekinesis, teleportation, pyro kinesis, teleportation and other. In general, these can be viewed as a stereotypical trope that we as a viewer are accustomed to from many other supernatural films or television series. These powers are utilized to further demonstrate the outwardly nature of the protagonist and how his potential is even greater than we can expect or imagine from the original source materials which are the many stories of *dokkaebi* from Korean oral tradition. Powers displayed can vary according to their use. Sometimes Kim Sin uses them to protect Eun-tak but often this category includes displays of power used to awe a viewer or other characters in the drama series. There are some however that can be interpreted as being connected to some aspects of Korean tradition. More

specifically referring to foresight. Till this day Koreans enjoy visiting fortune tellers' stalls across the country. One can see them in big numbers especially in tourist areas. People tend to ask about their future partners as due to hectic and fast paste lifestyles of many Koreans there is not much time left to engage with other people outside one's company circle. This makes it terribly difficult to find a life partner or new friends after being employed in a company. Displayed supernatural powers work in conjunction with other inhuman powers that are more specifically tied to a *dokkaebi* itself. Recurring is his innate ability to manipulate nature, in form of cherry blossom flowers, blooming in disregard to a season, commonly blooming in winter or cold months, just because he felt love towards Eun-tak in that moment.

### 8.8. Image of *dokkaebi* in the drama

Image of <i>dokkaebi</i>	Category	Number of occurrences
Image A	Historical depiction	9
Image B	As normal people	2
Image C	As in children's literature and media	10

Table 5: Image of *dokkaebi* in the drama

The *dokkaebi* was represented by various depictions in the drama. Primary the main character Kim Sin, who was the *dokkaebi*, then there was a rendition of a historical image of the *dokkaebi* roof tiles that was discussed (see chapter *Visual history of dokkaebi*), and the last was the one that is widely known and that being the visuals used in children's literature, with two horns, big teeth and a club.

Kim Sin was the main depiction of the *dokkaebi* in this drama and was present in all the episodes and main events. In the Table 5 the *dokkaebi*'s depiction as normal people is stated to have occurred twice because it was recorded only when the depiction or his visuals were first introduced or mentioned by other characters. The first being when he got revived as the *dokkaebi* and second when the grim reaper was surprised by his visuals as he expected the ugly ogre with two horns and a club. If every scene where Kim Sin appeared was counted the number would be ridiculously big.

Then the historical depiction of the *dokkaebi* roof tiles was utilized in the hilt of the sword that Kim Sin used as a general, and that is now stuck in his chest. It was also shown as a logo of restaurants or other establishments and on few posters promoting a historical play. Authors tried

to stick as closely as possible to the historical image of the roof tiles (see fig.1), used in the Goryeo era, since Kim Sin himself is from the Goryeo period.

Lastly, the typical depiction of big two horned *dokkaebi* with a club was showed the most, apart from Kim Sin. It was displayed when Eun-tak tried to study about the *dokkaebi*, when Sin bought her a *dokkaebi* plushie called Mr. Buckwheat and when Eun-tak used a photo filter n a popular smartphone application *Snow*, with two horns and a tooth sticking out. All of these were rather cute, targeting the cuteness preferring audience. Also references to the narrative of *Dokkaebi Club*, that is widely used as a children story these days were present, for example a reference to the song from the story together with the club analogy.

### 8.9. Duplicitous nature of *dokkaebi* in the drama

Duplicitous nature	Number of occurrences
For good	13
For evil	8

Table 6: Duplicitous nature of *dokkaebi* in the drama

Concept of the *dokkaebi*'s duplicitous nature can be traced back to the two tale types of *Dokkaebi Reservoir*, where *dokkaebi* helps the fishermen, and the *Dokkaebi club*, where the *dokkaebi* punishes the greedy man. In the drama, Sin was faithful to this concept of *dokkaebi* having a duplicitous nature, helping the good and punishing the bad. He was always by Eun-tak's side whenever she needed him, helped random people, for example a man who wanted to commit a suicide. On the other hand, he also punished Eun-tak's aunt and her children as they mistreated Eun-tak most of her life, punished the two gangsters who were order by her aunt, and played cheeky tricks on Eun-tak's friend in the end of the drama. He punished the aunt and her children by spawning gold bricks over which they continued to fight until they ended up in jail. Together with the grim reaper they punished the gangsters by erasing their memory and making them fight for all their life. And he slashed a stripe of Eun-tak's friend's handbag because she told Eun-tak she should find a man, as she did not know about Sin yet. It is evident that the depiction of *dokkaebi* in the drama is faithful to its duplicitous nature from folkloric narratives.



### **8.10. Shamanism in the drama**

Shamanism was hinted at in the drama in few scenes. First, when Kim Sin was being revived through his blooded sword, use of buckwheat flowers by the protagonists, Sin fearing chicken blood and Eun-tak herself being a kind of a shaman, as she can communicate with ghosts and is even possessed by an evil ghost in the latter parts of the drama.

The mention of chicken blood can be traced to the practice of animal sacrifice called *heuisengjemul*. Chickens are offered as sacrifices for both gods and ancestors. In shamanic rituals, chickens are used as proxies that are put to death in the place of a human who is cursed with bad fortune or a short lifespan (Chung 2013, 256). The Encyclopedia repeated inclusion of buckwheat flowers is connected to the ritual called *dokkaebi gosa*, where buckwheat jelly is offered to the *dokkaebi*, and from here the belief of *dokkaebi* liking buckwheat and buckwheat jelly originates. Other names for the ritual are *dokkaebi gut* or *dokkaebi je*.

Eun-tak as was mentioned above can be viewed as a shamanic character thanks to her innate ability to communicate with spirits. Shamans serve as a medium of communication between the living and the spiritual realm or gods. She even helps some of the spirits by fulfilling their unfinished business or their grudges.

### **8.11. Name of *dokkaebi* in the drama**

In the drama the creature is simply regarded to as a *dokkaebi*. Authors did not stray far from the folklore tradition and for the sense of familiarity and connection to Korean traditional culture simply referred to it as *dokkaebi*, differing from some other works like the novel *Familiar Things* (2017), where characters refer in various ways toward the creature and it will be spoken about in detail in chapter *Name of dokkaebi in the novel*.

## **9. Novel *Familiar Things***

### **9.1. Synopsis of the novel**

The story follows a young boy nicknamed Bugeye and his mother who try to navigate and survive in rapidly changing world they live in. We are introduced to them while they still live in a suburban area of Seoul where they lived relatively normal life together with Bugeye's father. The father worked as a trash collector, collecting discarded items. However, one day he was accused of stealing and was sent to a re-education center and we do not get to see him at all in the novel.

This event forces Bugeye and his mother to leave the suburban area as they simply cannot afford to live there anymore. They are contacted by an acquaintance of the father who offers them a place to live and work in at an island called *Flower Island*, an island previously used for agriculture now turned into a landfill. Bugeye's mother would make three times the money she made until now and they would live a shack which means they will not need to pay any rent. This is a big relief for the mother as she is not able to provide alone for herself and her child, they even get an eviction notice from a landlord. After moving to the island, we are introduced to the man's child a little boy nicknamed Baldspot because of a bald spot caused by a burn mark on his scalp. He wears an old shaggy baseball cap to always cover the spot. The two young boys quickly form a sibling-like bond and even the mother takes care of them both as if they were both her sons. They all work on a landfill for most of the day and in the little free time the little boys of the island have, they have built a little hideout for themselves.

Baldspot even introduces Bugeye to a family that lives on the island on the other side of the landfill. There lives a woman with her father, and they take care of many stray dogs from the island. The woman is referred to as Scrawny Mama based on a one little dog called Scrawny, they take care of. Her father is referred to as simply a grandpa. One evening as the two boys make their way to their hideout, they are surprised by an occurrence of blue flashing lights on the field. Baldspot is not as surprised as he had seen them before as an only one from the island. After this the two boys consult Scrawny Mama about their encounter with the blue lights and she refers to them as *dokkaebi* lights and calls them Mr. Kims. Bugeye is surprised by the realness of such creature and asks Baldspot on many occasions about the lights. Later they observe the blue lights few more times until they are approached by a shadowy figure that turns out to look just like they do, an ordinary little boy in ordinary clothes. It has a quick little chat with the boys and eventually tells them that his family is sick and need to eat buckwheat jelly to get well. Two boys turn to Scrawny Mama and grandpa with this issue. Grandpa states how the stories about *dokkaebi* seem to be true and even the stories about them liking the buckwheat jelly. Grandpa goes to the city on the other side of the bridge to buy some however, since it is a national holiday *Chuseok*, he can buy only a buckwheat starch. Scrawny Mama uses the starch to make the jelly at home. Then the woman and two boys pack buckwheat jelly with rice wine and head to the shrine. There the woman drank the rice wine and sprays it with her mouth on a trunk of a willow tree and shortly after her body starts twitch all over. After a while her voice changes, becomes calmer and

calls for the *dokkaebi* to take the prepared offerings. She is possessed by the spirit of the willow tree and the *dokkaebi* call her *Granny Willow*. Suddenly shadowy figures start appearing and eat the jelly together with the wine. Their appearance slowly morphing into a one of ordinary people. Even the small boy from before emerges and thanks the two boys for making the offerings.

At another time when the first snow comes down two boys venture back to Scrawny Mama's house to prepare some more jelly for the *dokkaebi*. The scenario repeats itself from before the creatures take the offerings and the little boy once again has a little chat with the boys. This time he invites the boys to his realm, and they follow. The *dokkaebi* realm is same as the one of humans. The *Flower Island* looks just like it used to before it was transformed into a landfill people take care of the land and collect the harvest. There is, however, a dark smoke like fog on the horizon which even forced some inhabitants to move from the polluted area. Little boy shows the two boys around a bit more, shows them how his family lives but eventually boys must leave and go back to the human realm. After this event the boys keep their secret from their mother and continue their ordinary life working on the landfill. They talk about the creatures and their realm between themselves, but Bugeye affirms his little brother that they are people and creatures are *dokkaebi*, and they all need to live in their separate worlds.

Baldspot continues to see the creatures as blue lights time to time in the fields. One night he goes alone the hideout and waits in hope to see the creatures again since it was after dark. Suddenly, blue lights appear and keep getting close the Baldspot till they form a shadowy figure and eventually turn out to be the little boy from before. Baldspot is ecstatic to see the little boy again. He tells him that his grandfather told him to show something good to Baldspot. He leads him to the landfill to the middle of the trash where Baldspot found a bag full of money and jewelry. It is a gift from Mr. Kims for treating them buckwheat jelly with rice wine. The boys keep a portion of the money for themselves and Bugeye decides to show his little brother a life in the city. They take a bus and experience what we would call a normal life of a child. They have a burger, visit a toy store and even buy themselves new clothes to fit in and feel like all the other children since their old clothes smell of trash. However, this visit must come to an end, and they return to the island and give their mother the remaining money and jewelry and she hides it under the linoleum floor in their shack. The boys tell this story to grandpa Peddler and he once more states that the stories of befriending the *dokkaebi* seem to be true.

Later a big fire breaks out on the island and many shacks together with all the trash quickly catch fire. People are frantically trying to evacuate the island as do the two little boys with their mom. However, due to the panic and chaos Baldspot gets separated from Bugeye and his mother who flee to grandpa Peddler's house. After safely getting there Bugeye goes back to search for his little brother, but he is nowhere to be found. People assure him that he must have evacuated with other little children to church. After the fire ceases, Baldspot is still nowhere to be found until his body gets detected curled under his favorite blanket, unburned. Bugeye only took the little boy's worn black baseball cap as a memento. Sadly, the money they found before together with the jewelry all burned in the fire with the linoleum flooring. Life on the island eventually continues as temporary tents were made for the people of the island and city plans to build some prefab houses on the other side of the bridge. Bugeye visit grandpa Peddler's house and Scrawny Mama's mental condition seemed to get worse and she ran out of the house. The boy follows her through the burned island till they reach the shrine from before. There was a small basin carved from stone where once was a spring all dried up now. Woman runs over there and starts frantically collecting random basic household items there were placed there and brings them to an altar of the shrine. Bugeye helps her and after they brough all the items the woman starts placing them under the altar as if putting them to rest. Bugeye places the Baldspot's half burned baseball cap there as well. Bugeye's life grows busier when the spring comes. They move together with his mother closer to the city to an accommodation provided by the government. Mother wants to send Bugeye to school but he opposes refusing to be locked up in a classroom, reminding him of a prison or a hospital. After he finishes work, he helps to feed the dogs at the Scrawny Mama's house after she is admitted to hospital because of her mental health. One day Bugeye decided to visit the old hideout he used to visit with his little brother. He sits there quietly but when it gets dark, a shadowy figure approaches him. It turns out to be Baldspot, all grown up with the burned baseball cap on his head. He points Bugeye to blue lights that started appearing and when he looks back, Baldspot has already joined the lights and slowly disappears with them in a distance.

## 9.2. Novel review

The novel *Familiar Things* by author *Hwang sok-yong* tells a story about a young boy and his mom navigating through a changing world of modernization and poverty in 1980' South Korean suburban area near the capital city Seoul. For purposes of this thesis paper, all the names of various characters, names of areas or landmarks will be based on the English version of the original novel translated by *Sora Kim-Russel* as e-book version available at Apple Books app. *Dokkaebi*, although not being the main protagonists of this story, play a vital role and carry main points the story tries to convey.

The novel begins with a brief introduction to the protagonist's life and situation he is in. There are a few description parts that paint the area he lived in with his mother and he usually spends his time. From this point it is clear, that we as a reader are not about to experience a fairytale story. Bugeye, a thirteen-year-old protagonist, is left school and spent his days roaming around the slumps with other boys lying about his real age and even a name. His mother worked at a market as a vendor, and he helped time to time to also earn some little money. After his dad was arrested for alleged theft the family situation rapidly worsened and they were forced to leave for the *Flower Island* through a help of a friend of his father's. They will not have to pay for rent since they will live in a shack and make a living collecting recyclable and somewhat valuable trash on a landfill that makes much of the island. The author spent his time in the beginning of this part also with description of the situation and background. As gloomy as a landfill can be author also describes the beautiful nature in the field of the island, a sunset and what a totally different scenario is also present on this island. It is exactly this place where we first get to meet the *dokkaebi*. The natural scenery creates very interesting dichotomy between the landfill areas full of trash and a horrid smell with beautiful fields of silvery grass and setting sun on the other side. Bugeye gates a new little brother with his arrival to the island and they quickly become inseparable.

While strolling through the fields they are startled by flashing blue lights. Baldspot mentions how he is the only one who sees them. This is an interesting point since Baldspot is kind of an outsider among little boys on the island. It can be interpreted as the creatures communicating or helping the ones in need or ones who are experiencing a sort of hardship. This can be connected to a duplicitous nature *dokkaebi* are believed to have. This belief is further utilized by the author in the later parts of the story that I will addressing a further part of my

work. Boys' hardship living on a landfill and through Baldspot we are introduced to an unusual family also living on the island, Scrawny Mama, grandpa Peddler and their many dogs with little *Scrawny* as their little representative. Scrawny Mama, getting her nickname based on a little dog called Scrawny, is a woman in her twenties who is troubled by some psychological problems. These ranging from tiredness to severe cases of her uncontrollable convulsions followed by random running away from their house. Despite all this family serves as a safe haven from the boys and they even share their stories about meeting the *dokkaebi* with the family. The family is not overly shocked by the news of the creatures and even help two boys to prepare a buckwheat jelly that was requested by *dokkaebi* because of their failing health.

Later, Baldspot with a help of the *dokkaebi*, the little boy, finds a paper bag full on cash and jewelry buried and hidden in piles of garbage, linking the event to a traditional belief of *dokkaebi* and their duplicitous nature, in this case helping the people in need. This can be traced back to a folklore story by the name *Dokkaebi reservoir (dokkaebi bo)*, where *dokkaebi* after being treated red bean porridge (*patjuk*) help build the construction of a reservoir overnight. I will elaborate on this parallel further in my latter part where I will dissect *dokkaebi* appearances and deeds in the novel in the category *Dokkaebi reference in the novel*.

The two boys then get a chance to briefly travel to *dokkaebi* realm that turns out to be nearly identical with the real world. *Dokkaebi* live on the *Flower Island*, however, there is no trash only beautiful nature, and the creatures make a living by working on the fields, collecting harvest and flower seeds. Just the way people used to live on the island before it was turned into a landfill, linking the story to the loss of traditional culture, the prevailing theme. Creatures point to the dark cloud that is slowly consuming the island and forced other inhabitants to move away. This can reflect the area in the real world where people have forgotten about *dokkaebi* and folkloric customs. On the other hand, it can also be linked visually to an enormous amount of garbage gradually taking over the land of the island. Either way, the boys are teleported back to the real world and continue with their normal life.

The ending of the story shows how the island itself and our protagonist Bugeye changed after the tragical fire breakout and death of his little brother. His life became more stable and comfortable after they moved to the accommodation provided by the government and kept visiting grandpa Peddler and his many dogs to feed and take care of them, showing his maturity. A positive change can be also seen when he meets Baldspot as a spirit, when he looked all grown

up. Giving a sense of closure to Bugeye and a hope that his little brother leads a happy life in a *dokkaebi* realm. Linking to this appearance the ritual he together with Scrawny Mama did after the fire was the half-burned cap Baldspot was wearing. This portrays the importance of traditional rituals that need to be upheld for the benefit of both living and deceased.

### **9.3. Themes of the novel**

There are two themes central to the story, the first being loss of tradition and the second being rapid modernization and problems that arise from it. These are not totally separate and are very much interconnected as one influences the other. Rapid economic growth and social change can lead to certain parts of the local folklore and customs to be left behind as a remnant of the past. In this regard, important thing to note is the setting of the story and time period. As was mentioned above, the story takes place in suburban area of Seoul in 1980'. The period of economic growth and industrialization of Korea. We can see the economic growth of a country simply by the amounts of trash that is being transported to the island daily. A concept of social classism is present as well, when people working collect in the first lanes collecting the most valued things, and a group of people who get to work with the valuable garbage thrown by the upper-class people. This creating a group of people, collecting what was left from previous lanes before them, on the bottom of the chain. These are the people living on the island in horrible living conditions with no hygiene barely securing basic human needs. A looking glass into the middle or upper-class is provided through the visit of Bugeye and Baldspot to the city after finding money and jewelry thanks to the grateful *dokkaebi*. They get to experience the life of ordinary children who take public transportation, enjoy fast-food and visit shopping centers and get lost among many aisles of a toy shop. One good marker and an anchor that helps to pin the story in time is a new phenomenon of video games and game called *Super Mario*. This serves as an antithesis to their usual way of life on the island where they do not visit school or spend their free-time playing video games but work together with adults collecting trash and in as little free-time as they have, they simply wander around on the fields. Changing way of lives and shift towards consumerism can be likewise link towards the theme of the loss of traditional culture. Where modernization during 1970s pushed the tradition away as a remnant of pre-modern times. Folklorists worked with a particular urgency in the early 1970s when overenthusiastic participants in the rural-development-oriented New Village Movement (*saemaeul undong*)

sometimes razed religious sites in villages and discouraged the seasonal village rituals in the name of anti-superstition (Kendall 2010, 138).

Also, this was an era of political oppression. Political oppression of ordinary citizens under the Chun Doo-hwan military regime, may be viewed through the imprisonment of Bugeye's father based on small theft accusation. It is not clear whether it was justified or not as author does not spend much time explaining this situation. During 1980s amid hosting international events such as the 1986 Asian Games and the 1988 Olympic Games, the government under the rule of Chun Doo-hwan, so called "beautification of the environment" bill, that aimed to eradicate slums and unregistered street vendors. Subsequently, thousands of urban poor families lost their means of livelihood and became homeless (Park 2005, 278). Here can be seen the parallel with our story where Bugeye's family lived in slums and his mother worked as a vendor but eventually were forced to leave as they had struggled financially. This led them to live in the shantytown on the island.

The shamanistic ritual performed by Scrawny Mama can be also connected to the second main theme in my opinion and that is of loss of traditional culture in modern society where the customs that were kept by previous generations are no longer being honored. Offering of a buckwheat jelly was a part of the novel that insinuated it or at least hinted at it. Showing us failing health of *dokkaebi* because of people's negligence towards rituals and customs. When the two boys together with the woman arrive to the shrine in the field, they place the jelly with a rice wine on an altar. After a while woman takes a sip of the wine and with her mouth sprays the willow tree trunk next to the altar. Her body started convulsing rapidly and once it stopped her voice changed and became calmer. Soon *dokkaebi* started appearing and addressed her as a *Granny Willow*. This part of the novel portrays Korean shamanism. More specifically *gut*. This refers to a ritual officiated by a shaman, with a table of sacrificial offerings *gutsang* for the gods, and accompanied by song, dance, music and performance. (Chung 2013, 73). Scrawny Mama serves as a shaman figure in this situation. Offerings are also present in a form of a buckwheat jelly and rice wine. Woman's convulsions can be even interpreted as a kind of a shamanistic performance or a dance. When her body calmed down and *dokkaebi* appeared she was addressed by them as *Granny Willow*, which signals the possession by a spirit or a god. This is in line with *gut* where a shaman is a vessel for communication between spiritual and physical world.



#### 9.4. Table of *dokkaebi* appearances in *Familiar Things*

In this part are compiled various appearances of *dokkaebi* in this novel and divided into categories according to their reference to the Korean folklore of oral tradition.

Page number	Content	Category
27	appearance of blue lights in the field	image of <i>dokkaebi</i> A
		<i>dokkaebi</i> reference A
37	Bugeye: "strange and mysterious <i>dokkaebi</i> realm"	name of <i>dokkaebi</i>
		<i>dokkaebi</i> reference B
46	Bugeye asks Baldspot about blue lights	image of <i>dokkaebi</i> A
		<i>dokkaebi</i> reference A
52	Scrawny Mama speaks of seeing <i>dokkaebi</i> lights and calls them Mr. Kims	image of <i>dokkaebi</i> A
		<i>dokkaebi</i> reference A
60	Bugeye: "those blue lights are <i>dokkaebi</i> ?"	name of <i>dokkaebi</i>
		image of <i>dokkaebi</i> A
		<i>dokkaebi</i> reference A
83	appearance of blue lights	image of <i>dokkaebi</i> A
	Bugeye asked if those are <i>dokkaebi</i>	<i>dokkaebi</i> reference A
85	shadowy figure approaches two boys but looks like a normal child	name of <i>dokkaebi</i>
	child says his family is sick and needs to eat buckwheat jelly	image of <i>dokkaebi</i> A, C
86	child looks just like them	image of <i>dokkaebi</i> B, C
	Two boys ask Scrawny Mama and grandpa about buckwheat jelly for <i>dokkaebi</i>	shamanism
100	Mr. Kims live just like people used to live in the old days	shamanism
	Grandpa: "So the <i>dokkaebi</i> is real."	image of <i>dokkaebi</i> B
102	Grandpa: "Story about them liking buckwheat jelly is true..."	name of <i>dokkaebi</i>
	they come to a yard in front of shrine and prepare the jelly and <i>makgeolli</i>	shamanism
107	Scrawny Mama drank the <i>makgeolli</i> and sprayed it on the tree	shamanism
	shadowy figures eat buckwheat jelly and <i>makgeolli</i> , the rice wine	shamanism
108	shadowy figures eat buckwheat jelly and <i>makgeolli</i> , the rice wine	image of <i>dokkaebi</i> C
109	all the beings look just like normal people	image of <i>dokkaebi</i> B
110	spot of blue light as they leave	image of <i>dokkaebi</i> A
		<i>dokkaebi</i> reference A

114	Scrawny Mama prepares buckwheat jelly for the Kims	shamanism
115	<i>dokkaebi</i> take the offerings	shamanism
	appear as shadowy figures	image of <i>dokkaebi</i> C
117	two boys enter <i>dokkaebi</i> realm	<i>dokkaebi</i> reference B
	<i>dokkaebi</i> collect flowers seeds	name of <i>dokkaebi</i>
132	talking about <i>dokkaebi</i>	name of <i>dokkaebi</i>
	Bugeye: "we are people, they are <i>dokkaebi</i> "	
	Baldspot saw them sometimes as blue lights	image of <i>dokkaebi</i> A <i>dokkaebi</i> reference A
139	<i>dokkaebi</i> appear at night	<i>dokkaebi</i> reference F
	no sign of blue lights	image of <i>dokkaebi</i> A <i>dokkaebi</i> reference A
	suddenly shadow appears	image of <i>dokkaebi</i> C
140	blue lights appeared	image of <i>dokkaebi</i> A <i>dokkaebi</i> reference A
	shadow reappeared	image of <i>dokkaebi</i> C
	blue lights lead Baldspot to a bag of money and jewelry hidden in thrash	<i>dokkaebi</i> reference B, C
		duplicitous nature
142	<i>dokkaebi</i> said it has something good to show Baldspot	name of <i>dokkaebi</i>
		<i>dokkaebi</i> reference C
		duplicitous nature
144	the bag was a gift from Mr. Kims for treating them buckwheat jelly	<i>dokkaebi</i> reference C
		duplicitous nature
		shamanism
147	an old story about befriending <i>dokkaebi</i>	name of <i>dokkaebi</i>
156	Baldspot: "Good thing we have Mr. Kims." for gifts	duplicitous nature
	name <i>dokkaebi</i>	name of <i>dokkaebi</i>
165	Boys kept Mr. Kim <i>dokkaebi</i> a secret	name of <i>dokkaebi</i>
171	briefly saw Mr. Kim <i>dokkaebi</i>	name of <i>dokkaebi</i>
178	Grandfather Kim in Bugeyes hallucinations	image of <i>dokkaebi</i> B
193	Bugeye found basic household items owned by previous ordinary people	shamanism
	Scrawny Mama put them all under the altar of the shrine	
196	dark shadow sits next to Bugeye- grown up Baldspot in adult clothes	image of <i>dokkaebi</i> B, C
	dark shadow vanishes like a blue light	image of <i>dokkaebi</i> B, A
		<i>dokkaebi</i> reference A

Table 7: Table of *dokkaebi* appearances in the novel *Familiar Things*

## 9.5. Generalization in the novel

Generalization	Number of occurrences
Image of <i>dokkaebi</i>	19
<i>Dokkaebi</i> reference	16
Name of <i>dokkaebi</i>	11
Shamanism	9
Duplicitous nature	4

Table 8: Generalization of *dokkaebi* appearances in the novel

## 9.6. Image of *dokkaebi* in the novel

Image of <i>dokkaebi</i>	Appearance	Number of occurrences
Image of <i>dokkaebi</i> A	As blue lights	10
Image of <i>dokkaebi</i> B	normal people	7
Image of <i>dokkaebi</i> C	As shadowy figures	6

Table 9: Image of *dokkaebi* in the novel

One important thing to note is the appearance of the *dokkaebi* in their human form. They are being virtually no different from humans in their visuals and way of life. They are dressed in regular clothes and make a living by farming and taking care of the land they live in. On the topic of clothing, one of the *dokkaebi*, members of Mr. Kim family, is seen wearing a cap with a name of a New Village Movement (*saemaetul undong*) from the 1970s, making s believe that *dokkaebi* are spirits of people that used to live on the island before. This is insinuated more in the last part of the story where after tragically dying in a fire, Baldspot is briefly reunited with his older brother who survived, as a spirit in a corporal form looking just like a normal human in human clothes together with Baldspot's beloved cap and in a form of blue flashing light. An emphasis on his cap is not accidental as after his death, Bugeye with Scrawny Mama performed a ritual where they placed various basic household items under the altar of a shrine. Relating this act to a belief of *dokkaebi* being spirits formed from old, discarded household tools. (Chung 2013, 154). Items placed to rest by the two once belonged to inhabitants of the island and were loved by their owners, therefore becoming a kind of a memento or a legacy of its owner after his death.

Visuals of blue flashing light stem from the tale type *Dokkaebi lights* (*dokkaebi bul*). The creature in that story also take a form of blue floating and flashing lights.

There is however, one more visual form that the creatures take, and this is the form of a shadowy figure. This stems from the general belief of ghosts or spirits appearing in the dark and approaching people from the shadows. The only direct link with a *dokkaebi* creatures can be made only through a paragraph in the encyclopedia stating that *dokkaebi* prefer dark and damp places. (Chung 2013, 154).

### 9.7. *Dokkaebi* reference in the novel

<i>Dokkaebi</i> reference	Folk narrative	Number of occurrences
Reference A	<i>Dokkaebi fire</i>	10
Reference B	<i>Dokkaebi club</i>	3
Reference C	<i>Dokkaebi reservoir</i>	3
Reference F	General beliefs	1

Table 10: *Dokkaebi* reference in the novel

Similarly, to the drama author of the novel *Familiar Things* also drew a lot of inspiration from the folklore narrative about *dokkaebi*. The greatest representation is of the tale type *Dokkaebi Fire*, since the *dokkaebi* from the novel appear mostly as flashing blue lights. If they wish they can then manifest looking like normal people, but their visuals as blue lights are always present. When it comes to adaptations of tale types, *Dokkaebi club* and *Dokkaebi reservoir*, these are sort of interconnected in the novel. When the *dokkaebi* appear to the Baldspot and lead him towards the bunch of money and jewelry hidden in the thrash, this act of good by the *dokkaebi* is based in the tale type *Dokkaebi reservoir* where *dokkaebi* helped build a reservoir, thus helping the fisher. Also, the inclusion of jewelry, which is a form of gold can be a reference to the tale type *Dokkaebi club*, where the magical club summons piles of gold. Apart from this, in the novel there are references to the folk song from the *Dokkaebi club* tale type, specifically the boys mention the “strange and mysterious *dokkaebi* realm” and in latter parts when they actually visit the *dokkaebi* realm. In the folk song there is a line about “beautiful and mysterious *dokkaebi* world”. In case of general beliefs connected to the *dokkaebi* there is only one represented and that being that the *dokkaebi* appear only after the sun comes down.

### 9.8. Name of *dokkaebi* in the novel

As was alluded previously (see chapter *Name of dokkaebi in the drama*), the *dokkaebi* were regarded to by various names in the novel. Firstly, mention of the “*dokkaebi*” name is by Bugeye

when he talked about “strange and mysterious *dokkaebi* realm”. He then connects the name “blue lights” together with the “*dokkaebi*” when he asks Baldspot whether the blue lights they are *dokkaebi*. The boys mostly refer to the mas blue lights after they consult Scrawny Mama and grandpa Peddler, who often regard to them as “Mr. Kims”. This name can refer to the grandfather Kim, oldest of the *dokkaebi* living on the island, with the surname Kim being one of the most common surnames of Korea, connecting *dokkaebis* to Korea even more. However, both the boys and the family continue to regard the creatures as mostly “*dokkaebi*” or sporadically using the other two names.

### **9.9. Shamanism in the novel**

Shamanism in the novel, although not directly mentioned as well, is a little bit easier to identify. The character of Scrawny Mama on multiple occasions plays the role of one when she together with the boys go offer a buckwheat jelly with rice wine to the *dokkaebi*. She performs kind of a ritual when she drinks the wine and then sprays the nearby willow tree down with her mouth full of the wine. After this her voice changes and the *dokkaebi*, that appeared shortly after, start referring to her as a *Granny Willow*. This act of making offerings to the spirit as is mentioned in chapter *Themes of the novel*, is a reference to the ritual *gut*, where offerings *gutsang* are made for the gods, officiated by a shaman (Chung 2013, 73). In the ending part of the novel, woman’s mental state worsens, and she runs off from her house as if possessed with Bugeye following her. Upon reaching the shrine she collects half-burned ordinary items and places them under the shrine. This as well can be seen as a ritual, where they put belongings of people that have died in the fire to rest, thus freeing the people’s souls. As a result of this n the last scene Bugeye gets to meet Baldspot all grown up as a *dokkaebi*, wearing the half-burned cap that belonged to him in his life, that Bugeye put under the shrine together with Scrawny Mama’s help.

### **9.10. Duplicitous nature of *dokkaebi* in the novel**

In the novel the *dokkaebi* do not play a role of a trickster but rather hep the two boys after they listen to their plea and offer them the buckwheat jelly, reminiscent of the before mentioned folklore narrative *Dokkaebi reservoir*. After offering the buckwheat jelly with a rice wine, the *dokkaebi* little boy leads Baldspot to a bunch of money with jewelry buried in thrash, showing *dokkaebi*’s good nature. After letting grandpa Peddler about this, he states “it seems that stories about befriending *dokkaebi* are true” showing that this belief is widely spread among people. The

evil or punishing side to *dokkaebi*'s nature is not present in the novel thus painting it as a goodhearted spirit.

### **10. Comparison of the *dokkaebi* in the two contemporary works**

The two works, the drama *Guardian: The Lonely and Great God* (2016) and the novel *Familiar Things* (2017), both utilize Korea folklore character of *dokkaebi* in unique ways, similar as different in some functions and visuals. The *dokkaebi* appearances will be compared in the two works based on these criteria: function, visual and faithfulness to the original folkloric narrative.

In the drama the *dokkaebi* plays a protagonist role while in the novel it does not and becomes relevant in the second half of the story. In the drama, Kim Sin is central to the plot as he tries to find his bride and end his curse of being the *dokkaebi*, while performing good or mischievous deeds to random people, stating that the *dokkaebi* can sense person's potential together with their past. Therefore, he punishes the wrongdoers while saving or helping people for their good deeds or who just simply need a little push in their life, like as is the case with a man who nearly commits a suicide, but Sin intervenes, saving him, and giving him a sandwich for his daughter who is coming to visit him, reminding him that there is still reason to live. Also, he is always by Eun-tak's side whenever she needs him, she simply blows a match or any kind of fire summoning him instantly. In similarly positive role, in the novel the *dokkaebi* are mostly ambivalent to the world of the human beings residing in their *dokkaebi* realm, choosing to reveal themselves only to the small boy Baldspot, and later when Bugeye moves to the island to him as well. But they reward the two boys with a bunch of money and jewelry after, they fulfill their plea of a buckwheat jelly offering. The two works differ when it come to the duplicitous nature of the *dokkaebi* in their stories. In the drama, Kim Sin is not simply helping other people and Eun-tak, he also punishes the bad and plays random tricks on people just because he feels like it. In the novel, however, the *dokkaebi* are shown to only do the good to people who remember them and make offering to them. They do not play any tricks on people or punish anyone. This is the main difference between the two works in terms of the *dokkaebi*'s function. Both works put the *dokkaebi* as a symbol of Korean traditional culture, with the historical flashbacks in the drama and connection to shamanism and traditional way of living by farming of the *dokkaebi* in the novel.

Visually, the two works are quite coherent. Kim Sin and the *dokkaebi* from the novel take form of regular people, wearing normal clothes and speaking human, Korean, language. The

novel leans a little more into the literal adaptation of the *Dokkaebi fire* tale type, where the *dokkaebi* at first appear as flashing blue lights in a distance, slowly getting closer until they transform into human like form. The drama, although, also taking inspiration from this narrative only included computer generated imagery of blue flames around Kim Sin's body when he performed supernatural acts. Apart from this, the drama includes historical visuals of the *dokkaebi* like the rooftop imagery used on the hilt of Kim Sin's sword, and visuals used in children's literature with big two horns, big teeth, and a club. Thus, both works in terms of visuals of the *dokkaebi* are very similar, while the drama offers a wider array of visual representations.

As was alluded to in previous paragraphs both works have taken huge inspiration from the Korean oral folklore tradition. In the drama, tale types such as *Dokkaebi fire*, *Dokkaebi club*, *Dokkaebi reservoir*, *Dokkaebi hat* and *Lady Dohwa and Bachelor Bihyeong* were utilized in varying degrees. *Dokkaebi fire* tale type inspired the character of Kim Sin visually with computer generated blue flames around his body, *Dokkaebi club* is reflected in his weapon, the sword, and with him being able to summon gold and punishing of bad people. *Dokkaebi reservoir* tale type influenced how the *dokkaebi* helps other people, with *Dokkaebi hat* influencing the grim reaper's ability to go invisible by wearing a hat. Lastly, *Lady Dohwa and Bachelor Bihyeong* story brought Sin's ability to communicate with ghosts. In the novel was inspired in very similar ways. It took the whole visual representation of *dokkaebi* from the tale type *Dokkaebi fire*. *Dokkaebi club* and *Dokkaebi reservoir* narratives' inspiration can be seen when the *dokkaebi* leads Baldspot to the bunch of gold in the trash after being treated the buckwheat jelly. It is apparent that the drama as well as the novel both took heavy inspiration from the folkloric narratives, thus the fact these narratives have big influence on contemporary works of art can be assumed.

Another interesting thing to point out is that both works include a shaman-like character in them, that being Eun-tak in the drama and Scrawny Mama in the novel. Both women possess the supernatural ability of communication with spirits, Scrawny mama even performing a shamanic-like ritual when offering the *dokkaebi* the buckwheat jelly with the rice wine. This being in line with traditional Korean shamanism where mostly women served the role of the shaman.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, the *dokkaebi* creature is still a valid and an extremely important member of the repertoire of Korean folklore tradition. It serves as a symbol of Korean traditional culture and in some sense of the “Koreanness” itself. Although, its visual representation and its originality are still a very hot topic among scholar, the *dokkaebi* has solidified itself in the Korean folklore tradition. Important is the present function as the symbol of the Korean traditional culture and its future place in the Korean contemporary folklore is just as important if not more. It continues to inspire many contemporary works in various forms of media, from comic books, novels, television drama series, and even video games. It still has a great potential to be present and inspire even more works, especially in the ever-growing media of video games, where story telling can take *dokkaebi*’s original narratives and motif to a new level where people would be able to interact with it and experience the values it portrays even deeper.

This research is meant to showcase the relevancy of the Korean *dokkaebi* in contemporary media and how it was inspired and influenced by the original Korean oral folklore narratives. Results confirm that the *dokkaebi* is to this day very relevant in contemporary media and as a cultural and historical symbol. In the drama *Guardian: The Lonely and Great God* (2016), the character Kim Sin, the *dokkaebi*, is even connected with the Korean concept of *han*, the regretful emotion of grief, where Kim Sin regrets and mourns his fate as the *dokkaebi* and all the wrong that has happened to his family. Also, through the use of flashbacks to the Goryeo Kingdom, *dokkaebi* is also portrayed as a historical cultural symbol of Korean people. On the other hand, in the novel *Familiar Things* (2017), *dokkaebi* served as an antithesis to then modern world, symbolizing the commoners’ old ways of life before the rapid economic growth of Korea in the 1970s and 1980s, when people used to toil in the fields. Both works are equally based on the original Korean folklore narratives and utilize it in similar manners. Further research may be done mapping and analyzing the *dokkaebi* appearances in other forms of contemporary media.



## Resumé

Bytosť *dokkaebi* je stále platným a mimoriadne dôležitým členom repertoáru kórejskej folklórnej tradície. Slúži ako symbol kórejskej tradičnej kultúry a v istom zmysle aj samotnej „kórejskosti“. Hoci je jeho vizuálna reprezentácia a jeho originalita stále veľmi horúcou témou medzi odborníkmi, *dokkaebi* sa upevnilo v kórejskej folklórnej tradícii. Dôležitá je súčasná funkcia ako symbolu kórejskej tradičnej kultúry a jej budúce miesto v kórejskom súčasnom folklóre je rovnako dôležité, ak nie ešte viac. Naďalej inšpiruje mnohé súčasné diela v rôznych formách médií, od komiksov, románov, televíznych dramatických seriálov a dokonca aj videohier. Stále má veľký potenciál byť prítomný a inšpirovať ešte viac diel, najmä v neustále rastúcich médiách videohier, kde rozprávanie príbehov môže posunúť pôvodné rozprávania a motívy *dokkaebi* na novú úroveň, kde by s nimi ľudia mohli interagovať, zažiť hodnoty, ktoré zobrazuje, ešte hlbšie.

Tento výskum má ukázať relevantnosť kórejského *dokkaebi* v súčasných médiách a ako bolo inšpirované a ovplyvnené pôvodnými kórejskými ústnymi folklórnymi rozprávami. Výsledky potvrdzujú, že *dokkaebi* je dodnes veľmi relevantné v súčasných médiách a ako kultúrny a historický symbol. V dráme *Guardian: The Lonely and Great God* (2016) je postava Kim Sin, *dokkaebi*, dokonca spojená s kórejským pojmom *han*, ľútostivou emóciou smútku, kde Kim Sin ľutuje a smúti nad svojím osudom ako *dokkaebi* a všetkým zlým, čo sa stalo jeho rodine. Pomocou záberov do minulosti na kráľovstvo Goryeo je *dokkaebi* tiež zobrazený ako historický kultúrny symbol kórejského ľudu. Na druhej strane, v románe *Familiar Things* (2017) slúžilo *dokkaebi* ako protiklad vtedajšieho moderného sveta, ktorý symbolizoval staré spôsoby života obyčajných ľudí pred rýchlym ekonomickým rastom Kórey v 70. a 80. rokoch 20. storočia, keď ľudia dreli v poliach. Obe diela sú rovnako založené na pôvodných kórejských folklórnych rozprávaniach a využívajú ich podobným spôsobom. Ďalší výskum sa môže uskutočniť mapovaním a analýzou výskytu *dokkaebi* v iných formách súčasných médií.

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