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Booklist

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Park, Kyong-ni. *The Curse of Kim's Daughters.*

Tr. by Choonwon Kang, Myung-hee Lee, Kay Ho Lee, and S. Keyron McDermott

July 2004. 299p. Homa & Sekey, paper, \$18.95 (1-931907-10-2)

Songsu Kim's heritage is troubled, for his mother committed suicide, and his hot-tempered father fled. Raised by Uncle Pongjay, he grows to successful manhood, marries, and, after the death of his first and only son, has five daughters. But does a curse hover over the family? This novel dating from 1962, when women were seldom focal characters in Korean literature, depicts the lives of the five daughters in the fishing town of Tongyong during Korea's transition from Hermit Kingdom to the first half of the twentieth century. Traditionally handcrafted hats, tables, and black lacquer furniture give way to encroaching technology but as slowly as Park's contemplative account of the women's changing lives traces familial antecedents and resemblances. Those who savor leisurely pacing will find herein a treasury of nuanced detail and a delicately textured portrait of society. Westerners may be confused, however, by the similarity of characters' names: Yongsook, Yongbin, Yongnan, Yongok, and Yonghay are the five daughters, and their mother, Punshi, has a sister named Ponghee.-- *Whitney Scott*