

## The Second Tail

Story By: Andrew Frinkle

I was a fox with one tail. This was normal, right? Well, considering I had been born without a tail, having a tail was a great improvement. Little did I know at the time that I was working on my second tail!

Growing my first tail had required me to learn a lesson: how to be a fox. As a Gumiho, a fox spirit, I was working on a collection of tails that would ultimately lead me to a very important choice, but I won't get into that too much right now. I had one tail, and I didn't know what lesson was required to get my second. There wasn't a manual for these things, and I was a fox, after all, so it wasn't like there was a book I could read or someone to talk to about what I was going through.

I had been born with 5 sibling fox kits, all of whom I'd surpassed in terms of hunting skills, hiding, speed, intelligence, and pretty much every imaginable way. Because of this, I'd left my mother's den first, heading out into the world to make my way. I really hadn't expected much more at the time, figuring I'd just eat, sleep, hide, and eventually die like every other fox. Little did I know what destiny had in store for me!



One day I was playing along a creek that ran through the woods I lived in. I was eating crayfish, bugs, and other creatures that lived along the river. It was a lazy, sunny day, so I was having a great time of it, sitting upon a rock in the sun. It was as close to perfect as a day can get, and that meant the peace had to be broken somehow or maybe by someone, right?

A hunter happened through the woods. Most hunters preferred to use snares, foothold traps, or cage live traps to catch animals for furs. Foxes have luxurious and beautiful furs, so we are often hunted for them. This particular hunter was armed with a bow and arrow, which meant he was generally looking for boars or deer, but he didn't seem to mind going after a fox. I was just resting in the sun on a warm rock when he stumbled across the creek and saw me.

Immediately, my head shot up. I was angry at myself for being so careless. My mother had taught me better! I darted to the side, making it into the bushes as an arrow pierced the air where I'd just been. The human had seemed as surprised as me to come across a fox, but he had wasted no time shooting arrows at me!