What is a Protagonist without their Reader?

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Characters:	Kim Dokja, Yoo Joonghyuk, Yoo Sangah, Shin Yoosung, Han Sooyoung (Omniscient Reader), Secretive Plotter (Omniscient Reader), Mention of Lee Hyunsung, Jung Heewon, Lee Gilyoung, Lee Jihye (Omniscient Reader)
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What is a Protagonist without their Reader?

by yourdeargatsby

Summary

Kim Dokja is dead.

Yoo Joonghyuk is depressed (and in love)

He uses the two brain cells and the marble in his head to realize that Kim Dokja is alive.

He goes to find him.

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AU - Canon Divergence

—-

“Welcome back, Kim Dokja. Your companions are waiting for you.”

Notes

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See the end of the work for more notes

“Tell me, you fool. If I continue to regress, will I ever meet you again?”

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Yoo Joonghyuk woke with a start, cold sweat covering his body.

The air around him was stale and cold. He was alone. Lee Jihye with his companions, and entrusting Yoo Mia to their care too.

He hadn’t seen them in a while. He wouldn’t go back.

The heavenly sword of gathering clouds laid untouched, a layer of dust on it’s blade. Joonghyuk ignored it’s existence, standing with his bare feet against the cold concrete.

A brief walk to the bathroom and a glance in the mirror showed Yoo Joonghyuk’s pretty face sunken in. Eyebags deep and dark as the mariana trench, slightly red.

Guilt consumed Yoo Joonghyuk. It ate away at him, day by day. The man who never cried watched rivers of tears fall from his face.

He wouldn’t eat. He wouldn’t touch his sword. How could he? The sword that killed him. The hands that carried the sword. Yoo Joonghyuk had never felt a pain like this before. The only thing that came close was when Lee Seolwha and his child were killed in his second round.

But it still barely came close. Yoo Joonghyuk refused to admit it. He refused to say those three simple words, those words that would bring explanation to all his pain. He wouldn’t admit that he had killed the man he loved.
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That Kim Dokja had died for him.

The cold running water of the sink blurred the lines between reality and Yoo Joonghyuk's thoughts. The reused towel brought feeling to his face.

The silent but heavy footsteps of the 28 year old man echoed across the empty building. The scenarios had ended, at least for a little while. The company was undoubtedly basking in their fame, after what had happened in Seoul.

He considered regressing, but he couldn't do it. He had seen the way that Dokja desperately pleaded for him to stop when he had tried. When he had been alive.

Kim Dokja was an anomaly.

If Yoo Joonghyuk regressed and Kim Dokja was not there, how would he go on?

'Are you having nightmares these days?'

The voice shocks Yoo Joonghyuk out of his thoughts, flipping him around in search of the voice. A whistle of the wind is all he is greeted with.

A blue scenario box, one Yoo Joonghyuk hasn't seen in quite a while, pops up.

[Your name is being spread across the 73rd demon realm!]

The bright screen glared at him from below his eye level, and his pupils dilated with being fed the light that had been shut out by curtains for a while now.

"…Kim Dokja?"

Was it him? Was he alive? He would have been expelled from the scenario. He would have died. But who else but Kim Dokja?

That one sentence, that one spark of hope, ignited something inside Yoo Joonghyuk.

If Kim Dokja really was alive, he would stop at nothing to get him back. Yoo Joonghyuk didn't care if he had to go to the 73rd demon realm to get him himself. Kim Dokja would be home. He would be safe.

Kim Dokja, His Dokja, would be here, with him. His companion. Separated by life and death only.

And with this, Yoo Joonghyuk did something he hadn't done in a long while. He got dressed, and grabbed his sword. He exited the building in the far outskirts of Seocho, barely further than the dome of Seoul.

The sun burned his once kissed skin, but he walked on. He didn't know where Lee Jihye, or Lee Hyeonsong was, but someone would recognize him.

Whispers surrounded him as he moved deeper into populated districts. He was well aware that he was nowhere near his best. He hadn't done much of anything these last few months except linger in his depression.

The buildings grew taller, and the people grew increasingly denser. Yet he still didn't recognize any of Kim Dokja's companions.

"Master?"

A young female voice called out. Yoo Joonghyuk stopped, pausing to look for the source of the voice. He would be lying if he said he didn't know who it belonged to, but he wanted to search for Lee Jihye regardless.

“Master!” Lee Jihye, Sword and all tore through the small crowd before engulfing Yoo Joonghyuk in a hug. “You look terrible. Where- No, How have you been? Nobody could find you after…” She trailed off, loosening her grip on Yoo Joonghyuk.

Yoo Joonghyuk looked over her shoulder, eyes catching sight of a banner saying something akin to “Thank you, Judge of Evil, Jung Heewon!”

“Is Jung Heewon here too?” He asked.

“Yes, we were just on our way out.” Lee Jihye replied.

Leaving Lee Jihye’s side, Yoo Joonghyuk pushed forward through the crowd. He began hearing Jung Heewon’s voice, watching as it steadily grew louder and louder.

“…o you know who Kim Dokja is?” She said, speaking to a sea of reporters.

They all began muttering quickly, quietly, things like “Kim Dokja?” or “He wasn’t on the list of survivors.”

“Kim Dokja is the real person you should be interviewing right now.” Jung Heewon continued. “He is the reason we escaped the scenarios. He is the reason all of you- all of us, are still alive.” She said, finally.

Her eyes caught sight of Yoo Joonghyuk widening in surprise.

“Yoo Joonghyuk?” She muttered softly, and all of the reporters turned to face him.

“The Supreme King!” “It’s Yoo Joonghyuk!” Their voices overlapped, and Yoo Joonghyuk was hearing too much. Too many voices.

“-Yoo Joonghyuk! What do you have to say about Kim Dokja?” One reporter stepped out to ask him.

Time slowed. There was nothing in space except Yoo Joonghyuk and that question. The world was a blur. It felt like he was still shut up, mourning the loss of the man he never admitted he loved.

He was speaking before he could even recognize the words coming out of his mouth.

“Kim Dokja is my companion separated by life and death. He will return. And He will live to see the end of the scenarios.” It was a confession, but the only person that would understand wasn’t there.

He turned to grab Jung Heewon. They had business to attend to. His words this time around weren’t all so different from words he had said before, but they weighed on his conscience so much.

The cameras started flashing again, and they asked more questions.

A reporter reached out, foolishly grabbing Yoo Joonghyuk’s arm, attempting to garner his attention.

[Incarnation Yoo Joonghyuk has activated the skill ‘Tiger God’s Aura Lvl 5.’!]

“This interview is over.” He said, dragging Jung Heewon back inside the building. Lee Jihye slipped inside quickly too.

“Master!” She spoke. Yoo Joonghyuk ignored her. “What was that all about?”

Yoo Joonghyuk continued to ignore her. He needed to plan. He had to plan. Something had to happen. He had to find Kim Dokja. His Kim Dokja. His anomaly.

Yoo Joonghyuk was in his third round. He didn't possess enough information to find out where Kim Dokja had gone. He was expelled from the scenario. His incarnation was destroyed. Maybe- maybe if he regressed?

"This round may be the only round you get to live as a human." The voice of Kim Dokja flashed through his memories. No. Kim Dokja had died for him. He would not die. Not now.

Who had more knowledge of the future than him? Who? The Dokkaebi, of course, and the constellations. But the constellations that would know wouldn't share information with him-

[Constellation ??? urges you to seek out Incarnation Han Sooyoung!]

[Constellation Secretive Plotter shares ???'s sentiment!]

This was one of very few messages he had ever received from his supporting constellation. And for another Constellation to support it?

"Where is Han Sooyoung?" Yoo Joonghyuk demanded. If his supporting constellation said so, the chances of her knowing were astronomical.

"Hey, Master, why don't you sit down first? You look terrible. Take a break." Lee Jihye asked. Jung Heewon nodded along with her.

"No. I have three days. There's no time. Where is Han Sooyoung?" Yoo Joonghyuk asked again.

"We don't know." A new voice, this time. It called from above. Yoo Joonghyuk turned his attention to see, and was greeted with the sight of a pale Yoo Sangah.

Yoo Joonghyuk said nothing at all in response to this. He looks up instead, at the pale and bland ceiling of the complex they were apparently residing inside of.

“Where?” He demanded. He knew they were looking at them. at him.

[Constellation ‘???’ says that they do not know where Incarnation ‘Han Sooyoung’ is]

[Constellation ‘Demon-like Judge of Fire’ says that Constellation ‘Abssyal Black Flame Dragon’ is incarnation ‘Han Sooyoung’’s sponsor.]

[Constellation ‘Demon-like Judge of Fire’ says that they know what you are doing and that they wish to help.]

[You have been sponsored 1000 coins.]

While the information was helpful, it didn’t help much. Yoo Joonghyuk hadn’t seen an appearance of the Abssyal Black Flame Dragon on Bihyung’s channel for a while now. He suspected that was because he was more interested in Kim Dokja, and Han Sooyoung than any of the other members, and once they were gone he has no reason to stay.

[Constellation ‘Abssyal Black Flame Dragon’ says that his incarnation needs help!]

[Constellation ‘Abssyal Black Flame Dragon’ says that he will help incarnation ‘Yoo Joonghyuk’ if he saves his incarnation!]

Impeccable timing. Really, what else should Yoo Joonghyuk have expected from the star stream?

[Hidden Scenario - Save Incarnation ‘Han Sooyoung’]

Category : Hidden

Difficulty : B+

Clear Conditions : Incarnation ‘Han Sooyoung’ is in grave danger. Save her from peril and receive your rewards

Time Limit : 5 hours

Compensation : Help from incarnation ‘Han Sooyoung’

Failure : Death of Incarnation ‘Han Sooyoung’ and the inability to find that who you seek.

Turning away from looking at the hidden scenario screen, he looked at his… Yoo Joonghyuk wasn’t sure what they were. The only people he had ever considered a companion were both dead, and he was on his way to save one. Lee Jihye qualified as a disciple of sorts, but Jung Heewon and Yoo Sangah didn’t fit into anything.

“Hey, aren’t these compensations a little too much? Why would we even need that Sooyoung-ssi’s help-” Lee Jihye started but was abruptly cut off by Yoo Joonghyuk.

“I accept the scenario.” Lee Jihye looked at Yoo Joonghyuk in a mixture of shock and denial. Yoo Joonghyuk had disappeared for months, no word, no message, nothing. And suddenly he was back, accepting Hidden Scenarios with terrible compensation and refusing to explain himself.

Jung Heewon looked at Yoo Joonghyuk curiously. What on earth was he up to?

“I accept as well.” She said, after a minute or two of consideration.

Yoo Sangah, who up until now had remained almost completely silent, spoke now too.

“I will accept.”

Lee Jihye's mouth could have hit the floor from the shock. What on earth? The constellations and the Star Stream hadn't set a next date for the next main scenario start, and while the remaining and unsplit members had mostly busied themselves with sub or hidden scenarios, there was no reason to take a terrible one such as this.

"Ah.. you've backed me into a corner here Master. I'll accept the scenario too I guess…" She mumbled and trailed off.

[Constellation 'Abyssal Black flame dragon' is overjoyed at the amount of support he is receiving!]

[Constellation 'Abyssal Black Flame Dragon' says that his incarnation is trapped in the Yeonsu-gu district!]

The speed at which Yoo Joonghyuk moved from his spot in the entrance hallway to the door could have been recorded as a world record.

The reporters remained outside, waiting for them to come out.

Yoo Joonghyuk's heavy and quick steps kept them rooted in their spot, unable to move or perhaps unwilling. Jung Heewon, Lee Jihye, and Yoo Sangah followed him out soon after.

The faces on the reporters faces were astronomical after seeing the Supreme King, The Judge of Evil, The Naval Commander, and The Moon Priestess all follow each other out of the house on a seemingly serious mission.

"Hey Sangah-noona, what about the children?" Lee Jihye asked, the only person in the group speaking the most.

Yoo Joonghyuk only had to push through one or two people of the crowd before they parted for them. The faster he could exit the crowd, the faster he could use a skill to get there faster.

“I called Hyunsung to watch them until they could join us after the scenario, don’t worry.” For some reason Yoo Joonghyuk found himself letting out a sigh at this information. Why was he relieved? They weren’t his kids. Kim Dokja cared about them and would be devastated if he came back to find out they were hurt, or worse.. it solved that question he supposed.

Love did strange things to Seoul’s Supreme King. He felt no more sappy than his normal ‘Stick up ass’ personality, and he wasn’t flushed more than usual, but he felt so much more sad than when a person normally died. He found himself not wanting to do anything that Kim Dokja wouldn’t want him to do.

The weirdest part about all of it was that he could never quite envision Kim Dokja’s face. It was blurry in his memories, or something was off. Had it always been like that? He could envision his sarcastic remarks, and his better than all and self sacrificing personality, and his matching white jacket, but he couldn’t envision his face.

Even still, the blurred face squid of his memories still had the most beautiful smile he had ever seen.

The crowd dispersed, and they were alone except for a few eyes from windows or streets a few away.

“…You all can keep up.” It wasn’t exactly a statement, more meant to be a question, but Yoo Joonghyuk seemed to be even more emotionally constipated than normal.

Despite this, the three women nodded.

Activating one of his skills, Yoo Joonghyuk took off. Yoo Sangah and Lee Jihye lagged a small amount behind, but Jung Heewon kept up easily.

“Yoo Joonghyuk. You know something, don’t you?” She asked, side by side with Yoo Joonghyuk.

“…Yes.” Was all he replied.

“I won’t lie to you, Yoo Joonghyuk. I don’t trust you. But Kim Dokja did. And if all else fails I will always trust in Dokja-ya. He’s never once let us down.” Jung Heewon replied.

Yoo Joonghyuk did not say anything in reply to that. What was there to say? He trusted him companion more than anything too.

The trees flew past in a blur, unidentifiable and gone in an instant. Yoo Joonghyuk slowly started deactivating his skill, slowing to a stop in Yeonsu-gu.

Jung Heewon was still right next to him, Yoo Sangah and Lee Jihye next. The City looked practically perfect compared to the shape Seoul was in, except for the singular building on fire. Suprisingly enough, there weren’t very many people around it.

Nobody said anything. If Han Sooyoung wasn’t in that building or had something to do with it, Yoo Joonghyuk may as well eat soil.

Heavy boots hit unfiltered ground, small dust puddles spraying out with force. The distance was comparably small, smaller than Yoo Joonghyuk had expected it to be.

The world seemed to feel warped around him, trapped in an existence that only had one doorway out, and he couldn’t quite get there.

He paused, making out a figure in front of the scalding flames. The short black hair of Han Sooyoung stood out against the painful red.

“Is this the scenario? She looks okay, though?” Lee Jihye asked.

“She’s crying.” Yoo Joonghyuk said. He took another step forward. He didn’t like Han Sooyoung, truth be told, but something compelled him to take a step forward. And another. And another.

Yoo Sangah stepped forward with him, looking almost as if she was going to cry too. There was something in her eyes, something that he only faintly recognized.

Yoo Joonghyuk couldn’t save Han Sooyoung. Not alone. He didn’t matter to her, not the way she needed. Despite threatening each other in egregious ways, Yoo Joonghyuk knew that Yoo Sangah could.

“She needs you.” Was all he really said. His voice was parched, scorched by the flames. Heat resistance didn’t work well on his vocal cords, apparently.

“She hates me.”

Yoo Joonghyuk paused at that. He could feel the eyes of Jung Heewon and Lee Jihye behind them, watching, not hearing.

“She hates you the same way I hate Kim Dokja.”

Yoo Joonghyuk realized that Yoo Sangah had known all along. Perhaps not with entire certainty, but she had known. She was the first person to know Kim Dokja’s mother, and his past, she had been in his past. She would have seen the way they looked at each other.

She continued forward, and Yoo Joonghyuk followed behind, a few steps further back.

“Han Sooyoung.” He said.

“Sooyoung-yeonin.” Yoo Sangah said at the same time. The meaning didn’t slip past Yoo Joonghyuk, but he ignored it. There was no need to bring it up.

Han Sooyoung didn’t turn around.

Yoo Sangah placed a hand on her shoulder.

There was no literal saving in The Black Flame dragon’s request. What Han Sooyoung needed was to be listened to.

Yoo Joonghyuk stepped up next to Han Sooyoung, watching the flames lick at the building. It felt like a trio, but incomplete, like a fourth was meant to stand next.

A sight to behold. The Moon Priestess hand at the Black Flame Empress’s shoulder, and the Supreme King offering a sort of solace for once in his regressed lives.

“What is this building?” Yoo Sangah asked, voice quiet.

“It’s where I grew up.” Han Sooyoung said in reply.

Yoo Joonghyuk understood then. He didn’t remember his parents well. He didn’t remember much of anything about them, really. He was sure he had parents, he just didn’t know them.

“My mother… was an actress.” Han Sooyoung started slowly. “My father worked for the National assembly. They weren’t married. I was a mistake. They placed me here, when I was young. They visited every once in a while, to keep up the pretenses that they loved me.”

Han Sooyoung drew in a sharp breath at this, tears falling down her face slightly more quickly.

“They thought I wouldn’t see the look in their eyes. The hatred.” She brought up a hand to her face, wiping the last tears.

She didn’t say anything again, it was clear enough.

“My sponsor sent you here, didn’t he? I’m fine, I assure you.” She said, placing a smirk that she always wore on her face. It seemed to be made of plastic, and gave off the smell of toxic fumes.

Yoo Sangah yanked her towards her. Han Sooyoung’s body into her taller one. She wrapped her arms around her, and Han Sooyoung tilted her head down and cried.

It was the first, and most likely last time that Yoo Joonghyuk would ever see such a thing, but he didn’t relish in seeing it.

He was a foolish man, Yoo Joonghyuk. How could he be so naive to realize that he wasn’t the only one grieving? The loss of Kim Dokja broke something in everyone.

Everyone loved Kim Dokja.

Everyone mourned Kim Dokja.

A Father.

A Friend.

A Leader.

A Companion.

An Impossible Lover.

Yoo Joonghyuk did not cry again. His tears were a river bed run dry, used up on sleepless nights and fabrics burnt to ash.

He stood there, for a while, for a millennia. The silent sobs, the cry of the flames against the little girl that only ever needed love.

After a while, a scenario box popped up.

[You have completed the hidden scenario.]

He turned his head away from the remnants of the flames and the carcass of the building.

“She’s asleep.” Yoo Sangah said. She carried a limp Han Sooyoung in her arms bridal style. Her eyes were red rimmed. Yoo Joonghyuk understood.

“Take her back to the compound. I’ll get the others.” Yoo Joonghyuk said. He didn’t know why Lee Jihye and Jung Heewon hadn’t come up as well, though the answer was clear. They didn’t like Han Sooyoung.

Lee Jihye had come because she trusted Yoo Joonghyuk, and Jung Heewon had come because her companion’s companion was going.

The pair were no longer where they had split, so Yoo Joonghyuk continued walking. He found them easily, talking to law enforcement.

Yoo Joonghyuk ate his words.

‘Weren’t helping?’ Of course they were. Guilt coursed through the regressors veins.

He approached the two, making his presence known.

He looked at them, and nodded.

He turned his gaze to the nearest officer, who seemingly shivered at Yoo Joonghyuk’s presence.

“The situation has been taken care of. The fire is most extinguished. You can take of the rest.” He said commandingly. The officer no doubt knew who he was. Everyone knew who the supreme king of Korea was.

They had likely also gotten the scenario notification, but wanted to double check.

“I sent Yoo Sangah back with Han Sooyoung.” Yoo Joonghyuk said only.

Jung Heewon and Lee Jihye nodded at each other, the explanation making enough sense to them.

“Should we head back then now as well?” Jung Heewon asked.

“Makes sense.” Lee Jihye replied, the women spiraling off into a conversation of their own.

“..i’m sorry.” Yoo Joonghyuk said quietly, no more than a whisper at best.

“Eh? Master what did you say?” Lee Jihye asked, confused. Jung Heewon had a similar look on her face.

He didn’t know why he said it. He just felt compelled to. He was being rash again. He had assumed they left, unhelping.

He didn’t explain or say anything else.

[Constellation, Demon-like Judge of Fire heard what you said and is proud of you.]

[1000 coins have been sponsored.]

[You have invested 1000 coins into agility.]

[Agility level 25 → level 32]

Yoo Joonghyuk took off, steps faster than the wind. He left his… friends, behind. The trip back was shorter than the way there, but it felt all the more longer, and more tiring than before.

The crowd of reporters had since dispersed, and there was a simple path to the door. He felt eyes on him from above, yet when he looked up all he saw was a face and the swish of a curtain, short enough to be able to unrecognize the face.

He entered the house, having been unlocked for whatever reason. There was a simple living room on one side, and the smallest kitchen Yoo Joonghyuk had ever seen on the other. His feet found the stairs upward.

The second floor held an undecorated bedroom, with a few personal items that seemed to belong to Jung Heewon. The next was empty, all lights turned off, with a few empty bowls here and there, and wrappers of left over convenience store food. The second to last was just as undecorated as the first, but with Lee Jihye’s hat marking the room.

The last room stood ominous across the hall from him. He turned the knob slowly, being careful for once in his 3 lives.

Shin Yoosung and Lee Gilyeong stood to one corner, looking as depressed as Yoo Joonghyuk during his midlife crisis and his post-Kim Dokja Depression.

Yoo Sangah sat on the ground next to a messily made up and large bed that currently rested Han Sooyoung.

“She hasn’t woken up yet.” Yoo Sangah said.

Yoo Joonghyuk progressed further into the room. The eyes of Gilyeong resembled those he had seen only for a moment, peeking out, solving that mystery.

“No. She’s awake.” Yoo Joonghyuk said, looming over the much smaller figure. Han Sooyoung flinched at this declaration, face shifting slightly.

“Ah.. really can’t fool the protagonist, can you?” She said.

“What?” Yoo Joonghyuk said. At least he knew she was back to whatever normal could be called normal of Han Sooyoung.

She didn’t dignify him with an answer, ignoring his question and moving on.

“I suppose now that I’m awake you want me to hel-” She started, but Yoo Joonghyuk cut her off.

“Are you alright.” He didn’t phrase it like a question, simply stating it.

Han Sooyoung's eyes widened at this, confusion flooding her (ugly) face. She wasn't really ugly, but that sort of Ugliest King Blurry.

She ruined the shock with an annoying smirk, and any concern that Yoo Joonghyuk did possibly have for her vanished.

"Awwwh do you care about me?" She teased, mockingly.

"Not particularly. But every other being in this room does. And I know there are more outside of it that do too. At least for your lover's sake, let them know you're alright." He said. Yoo Joonghyuk had started sounding more and more poetic lately. More like Kim Dokja.

Yoo Sangah's face flushed a deep red magenta colour at being called her lover, but nobody denied it.

Han Sooyoung turned her gaze from his to look at the other people in the room and see if what he was saying was true, and was met with the undeniable proof that it was.

"I am. I don't regret my choices- nor should you expect me to learn from them, but i'm okay now." She said. Yoo Sangah smiled.

"Now do you want the help you were promise-" She said again, almost finishing her sentence this time.

"Yes. But not here." He said. Lee Jihye and Jung Heewon were yet back to protest Yoo Joonghyuk stealing their reward for himself, but it would pay out for them too in the end.

"Alright." Han Sooyoung said without protest, standing up and leaving her covers behind. Yoo Joonghyuk didn't wait for her to follow behind before walking out the door and across the hall to Lee Jihye's room.

Once the pair were in the room, Yoo Joonghyuk locked the door.

[Incarnation ‘Yoo Joonghyuk’ is using skill ‘Silent Room’!]

[The sounds from inside and outside this room will be unheard for 5 minutes!]

“What’s so important you need to keep all sound out, Yoo Joonghyuk?” Han Sooyoung questioned.

“Kim Dokja is alive.” Yoo Joonghyuk said, dropping the nuclear bomb.

[Multiple Constellations are in shock!]

[Multiple Constellations want to know how you know this!]

[Multiple Constellations are crying!]

[Multiple Constellations have donated coins!]

[You have been given 91,000 coins!]

“…what?” Han Sooyoung asked.

“Don’t pretend like you don’t know.” Yoo Joonghyuk said. There was a reason he had been directed to her. She would be the person who would know whether or not Kim Dokja was alive, and where he was.

But the shock didn’t leave Han Sooyoung’s face.

“Don’t tell me…” Yoo Joonghyuk trailed off. No. She had to know. She had to.

“It’s not possible. There’s a way, but it’s so incredibly risky that if he pulled it off he wouldn’t be the same again.” Han Sooyoung said. She seemed to be talking less to Yoo Joonghyuk and more to herself at this point, lost in the depths of her mind.

[Time remaining: 3 minutes]

“Tell me, Han Sooyoung.” He demanded. Yoo Joonghyuk was losing his mind. He was incredibly close, but so far he couldn’t walk the distance to reach it.

“Are you… going to tell the others?” Han Sooyoung asked. Why wouldn’t she tell him. He needed to know.

“TELL ME, HAN SOOYOUNG? WHERE IS KIM DOKJA?” He yelled. He felt cold rush all over his body. Could he not save him? Could he really not save him?

[Constellation ‘Demon-like judge of fire’ is crying over your camaraderie.]

[You have been gifted 91 coins.]

“If he pulled this off, if he is alive, like you said, Yoo Joonghyuk, he’s no longer in the star stream. Not our star stream, at least. He would have negotiated with the demons of the horizon to be sent to be sent to another main scenario, but his incarnation would have been destroyed…” She rambled, making only marginal sense in her ramblings.

“I know where he is.” She said. The feelings that washed over Yoo Joonghyuk with those five words could never possibly be described in words. “You aren’t going to like it.”

“Just tell me.”

[Time remaining: 30 seconds]

“Kim Dokja is in the 73rd demon realm.”

[Personal Skill ‘Silent Room’ has deactivated!]

Yoo Joonghyuk went to speak, but the moment his skill was disabled figures burst in through the door.

Lee Jihye, followed by Jung Heewon, Lee Seolwha, Yoo Sangah, Shin Yoosung and Lee Gilyeong all piled into the room.

“Master- you took the reward? What was so important-”

“Hey Yoo Joonghyuk, you should have at least told us-”

Their voices all started overlapping.

Yoo Joonghyuk had a destination now. He needed to leave.

[The 32nd Demon King is angry with the person using the name ‘Yoo Joonghyuk!’] Star streamed said, blue box popping up in his face.

They silenced as he read it quickly, trying to dismiss it.

He could hear their cries as he exited the room quickly. He didn’t need their help. He could save Kim Dokja on his own, the stupid squid.

He ran through Han Sooyoung’s ramblings again and again. 73rd demon realm. Story’s horizons. He needed more knowledge, but he couldn’t regress.

[Constellation ‘???’ says that you can find the Demons of the Horizon inside the Seoul dome.]

The constellation’s message popped up in front of his face quickly, and it solved so many of his problems. He didn’t completely trust his constellation. He didn’t know who it was, even, but nothing they had ever told him so far had been wrong.

Seoul Dome was sealed off. But nothing was invincible, right? He needed to get into the Seoul Dome.

[You have invested 1500 coins into agility!]

[Agility level 32 → level 45]

Yoo Joonghyuk took off. The sun was setting, casting a warm glow over Korea, and he could feel the harsh wind tearing at his face. He didn’t care.

The impending light blue of the Seoul Dome loomed over him as he skidded to a stop in front of it.

[Incarnation ‘Yoo Joonghyuk’ has used the skill ‘High Jump’ level 3.]

Jumping quickly to the top of the dome, Yoo Joonghyuk moved, looking for cracks or splinters, or even just a spot that's slightly less reinforced. The sun was almost completely gone now. He could see small flashes of light from below, speed skills of the rest of his group. He needed to hurry up.

The sunlight was gradually being replaced by the shine of the moon, glinting as it worked in his favour. To Yoo Joonghyuk's left, something caught his eye. A shimmer. A glint. There was an overlap in panels.

He ran over quickly, drawing his sword. He wouldn't be able to pry it off, he soon realized. But there were other ways to remove something you don't want there.

Wedging his sword right into the crack of the panels, Yoo Joonghyuk activated as many skills as he could, as fast as he could. If he couldn't break away one piece of the seoul dome, he might as well just destroy it.

[Incarnation 'Yoo Joonghyuk' is using skill 'Tiger God's Aura level 5!]

[Incarnation 'Yoo Joonghyuk' is using skill 'Electrification' level 1}

[Incarnation 'Yoo Joonghyuk' is using skill-

It was a terrible plan. It quite literally blew in his face.

[You have achieved the impossible! A new fable has been added to your collection.]

[You have achieved 'The one who destroyed the dome']

Yoo Joonghyuk did not remember passing out.

Yet when he came to, with a ringing migraine and thousands of blue shards around him, he could guess what had happened.

The other issue, was the ugly man in front of him. It was less of a man, truth be told, green skin and limp hanging cysts.

Yoo Joonghyuk knew immediately who he was. He had something on him, he could sense, that wasn't his.

"You are the Demon of The Horizon." Yoo Joonghyuk said, not asking. He was surprised that the demon had stayed around this long.

The creature smirked, teeth widening in anything but a welcoming smile. Yoo Joonghyuk was sure that he could beat this creature, but he was also sure that it could bite a limb off of him.

"I am. Who do I have the pleasure of speaking to?" He said.

Yoo Joonghyuk did not respond. Names were powerful, especially to the Demons. Nobody knows what he could do if he got Yoo Joonghyuk's name.

"Where did you send Kim Dokja?" Yoo Joonghyuk asked. He stood up, towering massively over the hunched figure.

"I know no Kim Dokja. I hardly learn the names of passersbys."

Yoo Joonghyuk contemplated describing the man, but the chances could be that he did not look the same. He could always just threaten him. He was likely lying anyway.

He grabbed his sword from the ground, covered in dust and debris from his wonderful little fall.

“Answer me.” He demanded, pointing the tip of the sword at the Demon’s face.

Thuds of feet came up from behind him. They had found him already, of course they had.

The smirk fell from the creature’s face.

“I normally do not answer the questions of foolish incarnations. But since I only sent one person somewhere in this dome, I know who you are talking to. I will answer you one question, since you are the man responsible for destroying this dokkaebi built dome.” The Demon proclaimed, like a fate from Olympus.

“Is that your one question, incarnation?” The Demon of the Horizon asked.

“No. Tell me how to get to the 73rd demon realm.” Yoo Joonghyuk demanded, dropping the false pretense.

The smile was completely gone now, not a hint of any sort of kindness left, regardless of whether or not it had been there in the first place.

“The only way to another scenario is through a demon of the horizon, a wenny man, like me.” He said.

The look on his face was horrifying, scaring enough to rattle the most strong of men.

“Send me there.”

“I refuse. You have offered me nothing but anger and discomfort. I will kill you and eat your stories, Incarnation.” The Demon, A wenny man, decreed.

“You will do no such thing. You will send me to the 73rd demon realm, or I will kill you where you stand.”

Yoo Joonghyuk could most likely kill the Demon, but he would not remain unharmed. That is, if he was alone. He had never been much of a planner, but it wasn’t a very complex one.

“You could kill me, but would you like to deal with the aftereffects? You will not escape this alone and unharmed, Incarnation.” His face was devilish, a gross thing only few had ever seen.

“I am not alone.” He did not withdraw his sword or even move it, but he watched as two other long blades joined his, a hammer, and a thread.

A brief look of shock crossed the Wenny Man’s face, before Yoo Joonghyuk demanded again.

“Send me to the 73rd demon realm. Or you will die here, Demon of the Horizon.”

Begrudgingly the demon opened up a portal.

“Go quickly, Incarnation. And do not think this is over. I will seek my revenge on you and your companions one day.”

Yoo Joonghyuk sheathed his sword, looking at the other people.

Lee Hyeonsong was there now, returned from his venture to the army.

“You’re stupider than I thought if you think you’re going there alone, Yoo Joonghyuk.”

He was a fool, to think he could stop them. He couldn't stop them. He didn’t say anything to Han Sooyoung’s comment, simply stepping through the portal instead.

The 73rd demon realm was in shambles. He had been dropped off in some sort of garbage dump, but the scent of smoke and the putrid ash filled his face. There was a lack of visibility in front of him, but he could see well enough. Looking up, he saw the smoke coming from the east, and he took off in that direction. The sound of footsteps and small chatter followed behind him, signaling the arrival of the rest of the group.

The smell got worse and worse as he continued in, walking past ruined stone walls meant to keep intruders out. The smoke cleared inside, something keeping it at bay, but he could see the houses on fire, and the bodies literering the street. Something had happened here.

The direct cuts down most of the bodies were not Kim Dokja’s handiwork, and the man himself was nowhere to be seen.

Just a little more. Just a little more, and he would be able to find him. Be able to find the man he loved.

“What happened here?” Jung Heewon asked.

He heard it then, the screams. It grew louder and louder, dulled by the buzz in Yoo Joonghyuk’s mind.

The constellations were silent. They couldn’t see here, Yoo Joonghyuk deduced. It was a place separated from the scenarios, at least the ones on earth.

[You have entered a main scenario! Calculating Scenario…]

[Main Scenario - Fake Revolutionary’s Failed Revolution]

Category : Main

Difficulty : S+

Clear Conditions : The man claiming to be the Revolutionary has failed at a revolution and has incurred the wrath of multiple demon kings. Save the Revolution or Destroy it.

Time Limit : ???

Compensation : ???

Failure : Death of Constellation who does not belong to this world.

There.

He was here. And he had failed at whatever he was trying to accomplish. If they failed now too, Kim Dokja would die. For the final time.

“Split up! Search for him and save whoever you can.” Yoo Joonghyuk commanded, before darting off, towards the melancholy sounds.

His feet hit the ground, adrenaline rushing through his veins. Where was he? He was in danger. Where was he?

He felt a gaze on him. It wasn’t from anyone around him, and the group was gone, following his instructions.

Yoo Joonghyuk rounded a corner, and stopped. What he saw nauseated him. It was a town square, filled with bodies.

Looming tall figures holding scythes cut up bodies of those trying to escape, the screams coming from civilians holding their loved ones, bleeding out in their arms.

Yoo Joonghyuk unsheated his blade, taking down the killer closest to him.

[You have killed an executioner! You have been marked as in support of the revolution. Executioners will now attack you.]

Spectacular, really. He needed to get this down with quick.

He took down another executioner, and then another and another before they were all staring at him.

They were muttering something he couldn’t make out, perhaps angry at him for killing them. But Yoo Joonghyuk did not intend at all to stop. Their bodies fell to the ground, disappearing into dust once dead.

There were about 5 left, which wasn’t much to deal with. The first one went down in shock, the next as well. The last three ganged up on him.

[The mark of death has been placed on you!]

One raised their scythe, going to bring it down on Yoo Joonghyuk. Was this their big move? Yoo Joonghyuk brought his sword up, blocking the swing and stabbing the executioner.

[You are not a citizen of Syswitz. Mark of death has been nullified.]

The last two seemed to regain some humanity, realizing they could not kill the regressor. They were dead before they could even run.

A scream. Another? He turned to see an alley, three figures huddled in it, an executioner closing in on them.

Yoo Joonghyuk moved towards them, but something stopped him briefly. A white coat. Stained slightly with blood, hand clutching to his side. Kim Dokja.

Yoo Joonghyuk moved to help him, but found himself slower.

[The Demon Dukes of the 73rd demon realm are angry for the group of incarnations intervening. A temporary seal on their powers has been placed on them!]

[Executioners remaining ; 9]

Yoo Joonghyuk watched as the number dropped to 8, then 7 and resolved that they were being taken care of.

Yoo Joonghyuk ran against the current that felt to be pulling him back yanking him away from Kim Dokja. The strain on his body hurt, so so bad, but it wasn't nearly as bad as what he had felt when Kim Dokja had died at his hands.

Foward. One step at a time, until he was running. He darted in, coat flapping behind him moments before the Scythe on the executioner was brought down on Kim Dokja's bloodied figure.

"Found you." Was all he said, standing in front of the shorter man, guarding him. He pushed off, stabbing the Executioner fatally.

[You have killed all of the executioners! Rewards will be given out shortly.]

Yoo Joonghyuk ignored the box, turning to the man behind him. He wasn't too late. He wasn't.

"Kim Dokja." Was all he said, the pained whisper coming out of his mouth.

"Ah… I really must be dead if you're here, Joonghyuk-ah…" Kim Dokja said, reaching out to Yoo Joonghyuk. Yoo Joonghyuk reached back, grasping him, covering his wound as the man went limp in his arms.

He turned his eyes to the other two people in the alley, a woman with broken glasses, and a man with golden blonde hair.

He felt Kim Dokja losing strength in his arms, and he swooped him up bridal style. He needed medical attention. Now.

Yet Yoo Joonghyuk, in all his rash decisions, had failed to plan a way out. There was only one thing he could ask to rely on.

“Secretive Plotter. I know you’re there. Save him. Save us.”

[??Constellation?? ‘Secretive plotter’ grins down at you.]

The blinding white light and feeling of comfortable sheets against his skin was new to Kim Dokja. His torso hurt, more than usual. He had no idea where he was.

He remembered the 73rd demon realm, and starting the revolution, and failing. He remembered hiding in the alley with Aileen and Jang Hayoung, and sustaining a mortal injury. It was a bit fuzzy from there, but he remembered someone that looked scarily like Yoo Joonghyuk, annoyingly beautiful protagonist saving him. Well, that solved it.

Kim Dokja must be dead. He didn’t expect there was an afterlife, but this must be it. He moved his aching body upwards, moving to sit up. He pulled back the covers, only to find himself mostly naked.

His face flushed. Why hadn’t he died with his clothes, at least?

The door pulled open, and a disheleved Yoo Joonghyuk stood in the doorway, carrying a tray of Murim Dumplings on it.

“You’re awake.” He said, placing the tray down and rushing to Kim Dokja’s side.

Kim Dokja laughed. Of course his beloved protagonist would continue to torment him after death. Kim Dokja would never admit it to himself, but he was glad he wasn't alone here. He could have worse company too.

He reached out and grabbed Yoo Joonghyuk's face, who was leaning over Kim Dokja now.

"You're so pretty, even in the afterlife." Kim Dokja said, and giggled. He could afford to be happy here. He wasn't getting any more dead. He must be imagining the flush on Yoo Joonghyuk's face, a tinge of red fueled by the love the darkest parts of Kim Dokja.

"Afterlife?" Yoo Joonghyuk asked. Was he not sentient here? Did he not realize they were dead?

"I'm dead, of course. You're here clearly because of some delusion my mind has spiraled into." Yoo Joonghyuk raised an eyebrow at this.

"Kim Dokja. You are not dead." He said.

Kim Dokja laughed again. Yoo Joonghyuk frowned.

"I am being serious." He said again.

Kim Dokja stopped and studied him. He could give into his desires in the afterlife, couldn't he? Who was stopping him after all.

He leaned in and crossed the distance between their faces and kissed Yoo Joonghyuk. The younger man felt surprisingly warm for a hallucination.

He felt Yoo Joonghyuk’s shock in the kiss, before he kissed back fervently. His hand wrapped into Kim Dokja’s hair, pulling him closer.

His other hand slipped under his shirt, touching him, and Kim Dokja felt himself getting hot. He pulled away shocked.

Yoo Joonghyuk stood, lips slightly puffy.

He hummed, lips curved up ever so slightly. He walked over to a small window, where he pulled open the curtains, letting natural light filter in.

He could see people crowded outside, and a banner that had his face all over it.

“Thank you, Demon King of Salvation!” It read in large letters.

“W-what?” Kim Dokja stuttered, hand covering his lips.

He wasn’t dead? Oh god. What had he just done?

He looked at Yoo Joonghyuk again, but instead of disdain, he found the protagonist smiling.

“Welcome Back, Kim Dokja. Your companions are waiting for you.”

Fin.

End Notes

Comments and Kudos Appreciated!

Please drop by the Archive and comment to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!