Distant Sky Gauntlet

By Valeria

Introduction

You awake to total darkness.

It's cold, damp and stinks so bad it makes you want to retch. A bit of scrambling around lets you find a phone in your pocket. Luckily it seems to still have some battery life left. You shine it around your location and see just what is causing that awful stench. Corpses are all around you, crushed and twisted by the mostly collapsed building you find yourself in. It'd be best to get out of a place of death like this, so you stumble out from the one exit of the building you can find that hasn't collapsed.

It's just as dark outside. You can't even see the stars or moon in the sky. Beyond the light of your phone, it's just pitch black. From what you can see, you're in some sort of city, albeit one that seems to be badly damaged by some sort of disaster and is filled with the stench of rotting meat and death. It's here that you finally notice something quite important.

Whatever you had before waking up here is lost. You remember what came before just fine, though not what brought you to this place, but any ally, any item, any ability or anything else you gained is somehow lost to you at the moment. Not a comforting realisation, when you're all alone in the dark like this. As you look around the darkened cityscape, you see an immense, blank wall behind you, on which is written a message in huge, black letters.

REACH FOR THE DISTANT SKY

A message left for you. You don't know by whom, but you know it was for you. This distant sky is your goal. The place you must reach to find your way out of this hell.

It will be hard. You must climb your way out of the sunken ruin of a city you find yourself in, make your way past vast swarms of leeches, wild dogs and wilder humans, survive the terrible natural disasters that are still inflicted upon the world, the irradiated, smog choked surface of Gangnam and its surrounding districts on the surface, the other desperate survivors, the mysterious but all too lethal organisation watching over everything.

A place called Daegu is where you must go. A district largely untouched by the disaster, save for the evacuation of all citizens from it. Here the sky stretches above you, infinite in size and so wonderfully blue. The journey is a long and distant one, but no distance is forever. Believe in yourself and you will survive.

You are given nothing at the start of the journey, save the body you had before all this began and a single cell phone with a failing battery. To take anything more, you must make your journey harder.

Location

The city you are in seems to be the Korean capital of Seoul, in the Gangnam district to be specific. It has been devastated by the unknown disaster. After a few miles in any direction, the city seems to be cut off, surrounded on all sides by walls of black mud and dirt, along with deep drops off the sides of cliffs. In certain parts of the edges, you can even see lights from far away. Other parts of the city, if you're lucky. Maybe you could find some sort of tunnel or passage to the other parts of the city? Surely they have to be close by if you can see the lights. A way up could be found in those other sections.

Origins

Drop In

Unlike the others, you truly have no history or memory from before you woke up in this world. You have simply been dropped into a real life hell and left to find your own way out. Perhaps for the best. If you had no one here for you, there's no need to worry about who might have died.

Survivor

One moment, you were in the real, sane world. You might have been a student preparing for exams, a salary man returning home to his loving family at last or a scientist desperately trying to save the world from something terrible. But something happened and you can't remember what. Now, you woke up here, in a mad place surrounded by death and destruction. If you had a family, maybe they're still safe somewhere. There has to be shelters of some kind right?

Beast

You didn't survive the transition entirely intact. Waking up to a world gone mad broke you or maybe you just did whatever you had to, to survive. You can't trust anyone else around you, certainly not anyone who carries light with them. There are others like you here but even more feral. If you can show your strength, maybe you might make some allies? At least you don't lack for food. You never realised until now quite how tasty another person can be when you're starving.

Your age and gender is largely irrelevant in this place. Pick whichever you wish to be.

Perks

Perks are discounted for the origin that they are marked under but there are no freebies.

Drop In

Distant Stars Guiding My Way- 100

On the course of your adventures, you will come across, every now and then, messages that have been left for you. These messages, taking the form of huge painted letters on the environment, will always lift your spirits when you see them, filling you with hope that the journey is not in vain. They may even at times give small hints as to where you should go next.

Environmental Committee Report- 200

The disaster was not unforeseen. It was predicted but that knowledge was kept in secret from the wider populace. You'll never be taken unawares like that again though. Any event that would be on the level of a natural disaster such as an earthquake or tornado, or worse, now grants you an instinctual warning of where and when it will occur. The worse the disaster, the more accurate your information. A common twister might only give you a few minutes warning if you were in the same area but a disaster on the scale of the one you are now trapped in? You would know the exact moment it would occur a year in advance.

Just A Little Luck- 400

A million and one things could go wrong on your climb to freedom, to the open sky awaiting you above. While this option won't prevent those from happening, it will ensure you always have a chance. Whenever you encounter a situation in which you are about to die, something will interrupt to give you a few seconds more to escape. If a crazed woman is chasing you down a hall with knife in hand and is about to catch you, the floor beneath her will suddenly give way, tripping her up and giving you time to get away. These few seconds won't always be enough and if the same threat comes back after those seconds, this won't work on them again, at least until a fair bit of time has passed.

Survivor

A Right to Be Happy- 100
Stuck in the sunken hellhole that you are, others would find it a miracle that you can still find reason to smile and laugh. It's no false miracle either, you really are able to see the silver lining in almost any situation. Even with the world seeming like it's on the brink of total annihilation, just the sight of a familiar shop or getting to walk down a familiar road will bring warmth to your heart and a smile to your face. But you need something, even if it's the smallest of things, to feel this happiness.

There Is Always Hope- 200
You know who and what you are. Others may have forgotten, those feral creatures that used to be human beings yet now feast on human flesh. But you remember and nothing will change that. Yeah, there's no denying you got a bit more hardened with the cataclysm that occurred, but no matter what happens, no matter how far you fall to despair, you will never do something you would find abhorrent. Whether it be eating your fellow man, harming a loved one or even merely losing your self-control and lashing out verbally, you won't ever do these actions under any sort of pressure or misery, even what you inflict on yourself. Your actions are your own responsibility and you will always keep that in mind.

The True Strength of Man- 400
Like the young boy Haneul, you have been injected with experimental stem cells that allow your body to adapt and heal itself far faster than any normal human could imagine. Your body is able to heal in minutes or hours what would take most people months of hospital care, like being pierced in the side with an iron pipe. You could even recover from being shot in the chest or being thrown on a burning mound of corpses for a while. Your body will also slowly adapt to the conditions you find yourself in, such as gaining perfect night vision after spending a month or two in the underground with little to no light or finding yourself requiring less and less food and sleep by constantly pushing yourself past your hunger and rest limits. These adaptations have their limit, as does the healing, but with it you stand a much greater chance of survival. Just keep this knowledge a secret, as certain groups are on the lookout for the subjects of this experimental process.

Beast

Foul Blood-100
The leeches that infest the underground are perhaps the most underestimated threat to be found. Alone, they are little more than an annoyance but they are always found in their hundreds or thousands or more and can suck a man dry of all liquid in minutes. Your blood repels these little demons, tasting fouler then anything in the world, and will protect you from them even if you were to wade into a lake filled to the brim with the squirming worms. Any other sort of creature you encounter that feeds on blood will find the same disgusting taste awaiting them, save for when you willingly give your blood.

Deep Down, We're All Savages- 200
You need to adapt, to survive down here. With little to no light left and food scarce, unless you like the rotten or vile stuff that is left, you needed to look for more widespread sources of food. You, like the many others like you, found it in the form of other human beings. You've got a terrifying level of skill towards hunting down humans, the instinct that tells you what to do to track them down and kill them is finely honed. Your prey knows your nature too as when you begin the hunt for a man, he will feel far more terrified of the sight of you then he would otherwise be. Lastly, the flesh and other edible parts of a homo sapiens will always be safe and tasty for you to devour, no matter what diseases or other factors might normally make such a thing impossible.

Hunter in the Dark-400
The experiments the government carried out on man and animal alike in search of a way to survive the oncoming disaster was not originally meant to result in something like you. A terrifying fusion of man and animal, you gave up the appearance of a normal man in exchange for a body far beyond any human. You have the strength and endurance of a silverback gorilla male at his finest and the speed and ferocity of a Bengal tiger. You are bigger and heavier than all but the largest of men but possess sharp fangs and claws to tear at prey along with heightened senses.

Items

Items are discounted to the origin they are marked under and 50cp items are free for their origin.

Drop In

Leave My Mark- 50
You receive a set of paint cans and spray cans. They never run out of paint and come in any imaginable colour, as well as never being more than a few minutes searching away from you, even if you don't keep them with you. Useful for leaving messages of hope or advice to other survivors or perhaps just a warning to those who might poach on your territory.

Light My Path- 100
A helmet with a small but powerful torch built into it. This torch won't even need replacing of batteries, though it will run out and need some time to recharge now and then. A vital tool in this dark world, especially to fend off the leeches while you keep your hands free to fight the bigger monsters. The helmet though, will protect your head from just about any injury you can think of short of a chainsaw being taken to it. Even having a solid rock smashed into it over and over won't damage your precious skull.

Find My Way- 200
In your possession is a wrinkled but clean map. It seems to be of the Gangnam district of Seoul at the moment but if you were to move elsewhere, the map's image would change to match your current location instead. It will automatically mark any sort of obstruction, gap, cliff, blockade or other impediment to travel on the map's paper, even before you could have possibly known they were there.

Survivor

Red Sweater- 50
Could have been your very own or maybe just something you picked off someone who'd be unlikely to ever have use of it again, this red sweater will keep you warm and dry even in the damp and murky depths you find yourself in, save for if you dunk yourself wholly into water, though it'll dry within a minute or two. It'll slowly reknit itself if it gets damaged and always be a fit for you, no matter your size.

Hidey Hole- 100
A small foxhole, hidden from discovery by the mad things that prowl the city now. It's filled with supplies, such as food and basic medicine, and could support a small group of people for up to two months at its limit. Sadly, staying in here will accomplish nothing. It'll make a good base to get your bearings together and ensure you're kitted out but you'll need to move on eventually. You'll be able to find something like it in future worlds at the very least.

Through another's Eyes- 200
A small, portable and reliable video camera. While it'll never run out of memory or battery, the true draw of this is the night vision mode. Not only does it allow you to easily navigate the dark world you are in without drawing attention with bright lights, but when in use it'll grant you a preternatural awareness of your surroundings, alerting you to even the smallest indicators of another being's presence and enhancing your own stealth greatly, at the very least stopping you from ever stepping on something that'll make loud noises.

Beast

Grisly Tools- 50
A set of pots, pans, portable stove and cooking utensils. They're covered in blood and other pieces of animal and human bodies. It might not seem like it, given their disgusting appearance, but cooking using these easily portable implements will always be clean, quick and quiet, no matter the situation you find yourself in. And the knives make for good emergency weapons as a last resort.

Chainsaw- 100
Big, loud and very red. This chainsaw isn't subtle in the slightest but there's not much that'll stand against you once you rev it up. It won't run out of fuel and even if you actually use it on another living being, the fleshy bits will never gum up the blade and stop it from working. It's not too heavy either, so don't worry about being weighed down too much by this terrifying weapon. With the sheer sound of this tool, you could probably cow most of the creatures you encounter here.

A Gun- 200
It's a powerful handgun. What the exact model and make is, is up to you, but the sheer rarity of such a thing, outside the hands of the murderous organisation from above ground, leaves you in a position of great power amongst those underground. It'll always be by your side, whether that means in a hidden pocket or requiring you to reach into a concealed place to pull it out. If you empty the whole clip into someone, it won't just keep firing beyond what shots are stored in it but give it a few minutes and you'll find the gun has mysteriously refilled with ammunition.

Companions

The Only Ones I Can Trust- 100

You won't be alone, not quite, by taking this option. For every 100cp you spend on this option, you may bring in one of your companions that was blocked from entering this place. They will be there with you when you wake up but will be subjected to the same restrictions you have been. Having an extra pair of eyes and hands can get you out of more than a few sticky situations and having a friend or loved one there with you will help keep your spirits up. However, to gain the reward at the end of this journey, all your friends from this option must reach Daegu alongside you. You must go the distance together or not at all.

Let's Get Out, Together- 50

Along the way to the distant sky, you'll be sure to encounter a few other survivors travelling that road too, for one reason or another. Their fates may just be death, without your intervention, but others may make their own way to the promised salvation. Perhaps you could help each other survive until then. You might even make a friend you can trust with all your heart. By paying 50cp, you may take any one person that survives with you to Daegu along as a companion and an extra person for each 50cp. If no one survives, you'll have failed to make anything of worth with these expenditures.

Drawbacks

You may take as many drawbacks as you can handle.

Hero Mode- 0

For those who cannot bear to face the trials laid out before them, this option exists. By taking it, whatever held you back from accessing your powers, allies or gear is now gone and you have the use of it once more. However, you may not gain the reward for reaching the distant sky now, nor may you gain any freebies or CP to buy perks with. You may stay for up to ten years in this place before leaving. Use that time to save the world and become a hero.

Out with the Old- 100

Useful items or gear that you discover, from tools to food to medicine, has a bad habit of breaking or misplacing itself when in the hands of you or your allies here. You'll need to be prepared to regularly replace what you find and use here or just make do without, as nothing will last more than a few hours when in aid of you. Only CP bought items from early are immune to this effect, though they will be more prone to temporary malfunctions then before.

Welcome to the Jungle- 100

The government was experimenting on animals in the days leading up to the disaster, far more with this option taken then they otherwise would be. They all managed to escape, populating the underground and surface along the paths you might take to your goal. You'll encounter much more dangerous animals such as gorillas or tigers on your journey, though these will be quite rare, and likely face innumerable strange mutations once you reach the surface, though there is no guarantee these poor beings will be of much threat.

Lonely Distance- 100

Your fate is your own and your journey has become equally solitary. You will never find a friendly face in your time here, not even one pretending to be so, and you cannot take the companion options from earlier. Your journey is one that must be made alone and under your own strength, unsupported by others. Be careful not to go mad from the long walk alone through the dark.

Monster- 200

You're not alone down here. Beyond the cannibals and dogs that would normally populate the ravaged city is a singular madman who has fixated on you. They'll chase you to the ends of the world, a more than likely idea in these times, and nothing seems to put them down for good, only hold them back from you for a few hours at best. If you could make it to the surface you might be able to have a final encounter to off them for good but until then, this crazed beast will do all within their savage strength and feral cunning to see you and yours dead before you reach the top.

I Have to Save Them- 200

You have someone who woke up with you, someone not from a previous life. A friend, a sibling, a loved one. Whoever they are to you, they're frail and scared and rely on you to help them almost completely. At most, they'd be able to hold a torch for you, and any sort of combat is almost certain to result in a rapid worsening of their condition. They're dying down here and they know it. But they wish, with all their heart, that they could see the sky one last time. To gain your reward, you need to bring this precious, ill person with you along the whole journey to your goal and they must survive, no matter what.

Amnesia Cells- 200
You were one of the original experiments for the Haneul project and received only its downsides. Your memory has been wiped clean. You remember nothing of the time before you woke up here, even from out of this world. You'll be more confused and scared then ever without these to guide you and the lapses in knowledge may sometimes even endanger your life here, not to mention what it may do to your morale. But as time passes, you may recover portions of this lost memory, though only upon reaching the distant sky will you recover your past in full.

Blood of the World- 300
The earth has cracked open beneath you and the immense pressure is causing the magma from the core to rise up at terrifying speeds. Your journey to reach the distant sky is now a race against the boiling lava rising below you. You will need to out-climb the rising death as well as deal with the quakes and destruction it causes beneath you. If you are not fast enough, even the surface will be flooded.

I'm Mad, You're Mad- 300
Your mind did far worse than just crack. It broke entirely and you are just barely hanging on to the last shreds of sanity you have left. Be prepared to fight not just the breaking world around you but also your own shattering mind. Hallucinations, black outs, fits of unexplained fury or misery. How long can you hold out when you cannot truly trust what you see or what you think? Only with luck and sheer force of will can you prevail in spite of the madness you are sinking into. Only the clear blue sky will restore your mind to what it originally was, that at least, you will never forget.

Hey, Yeool- 300
The world seems to actively despise you and work against you. The environment is unnaturally hostile towards you, with buildings falling over in just the right way to block your path, crevices separating you from the easy routes past foes, the ground being littered with fragile objects that alert foes to your every move and so on. Perhaps it is just incredibly bad luck but with the nightmarish events you have seen so far, is it any wonder you might think that the planet itself wants to kill you?

Jumper Has Gone The Distance

You find these words awaiting you in Daegu, in the same gigantic paint script you have encountered at the start of your journey and many times after. You made it. Against all odds, you survive and found the Distant Sky.

It's so beautiful. It stretches on for as far as your eye can see. You almost forgot just how blue it was in your time spent in the darkness and in the smog.

A light is falling down from the sky towards you, flashing as it grows larger and larger. You don't need to worry though. You made it to salvation after all. As your vision is consumed by a bright light, you only feel a gentle warmth carrying you and any with you onwards to your next adventure.

Your reward is what has been growing within you over the course of your journey, merely brought to your attention in full. Your will, the core of your being, will never break or bend. You have suffered and strained and struggled and found yourself victorious. The memory of your time here is all you will need to call on to dispel any form of doubt or uncertainty or even control over you. So long as you remember the sky you reached, you will never falter nor look back on yourself, nor will any be able to force you to do so.

Notes

This is a Gauntlet, as it says in the title. Dying here will not end your chain, simply boot you out to continue your chain without your reward or anything you purchased or picked up here.

The truth of the disaster that caused this setting to become how it is described below in blank text.