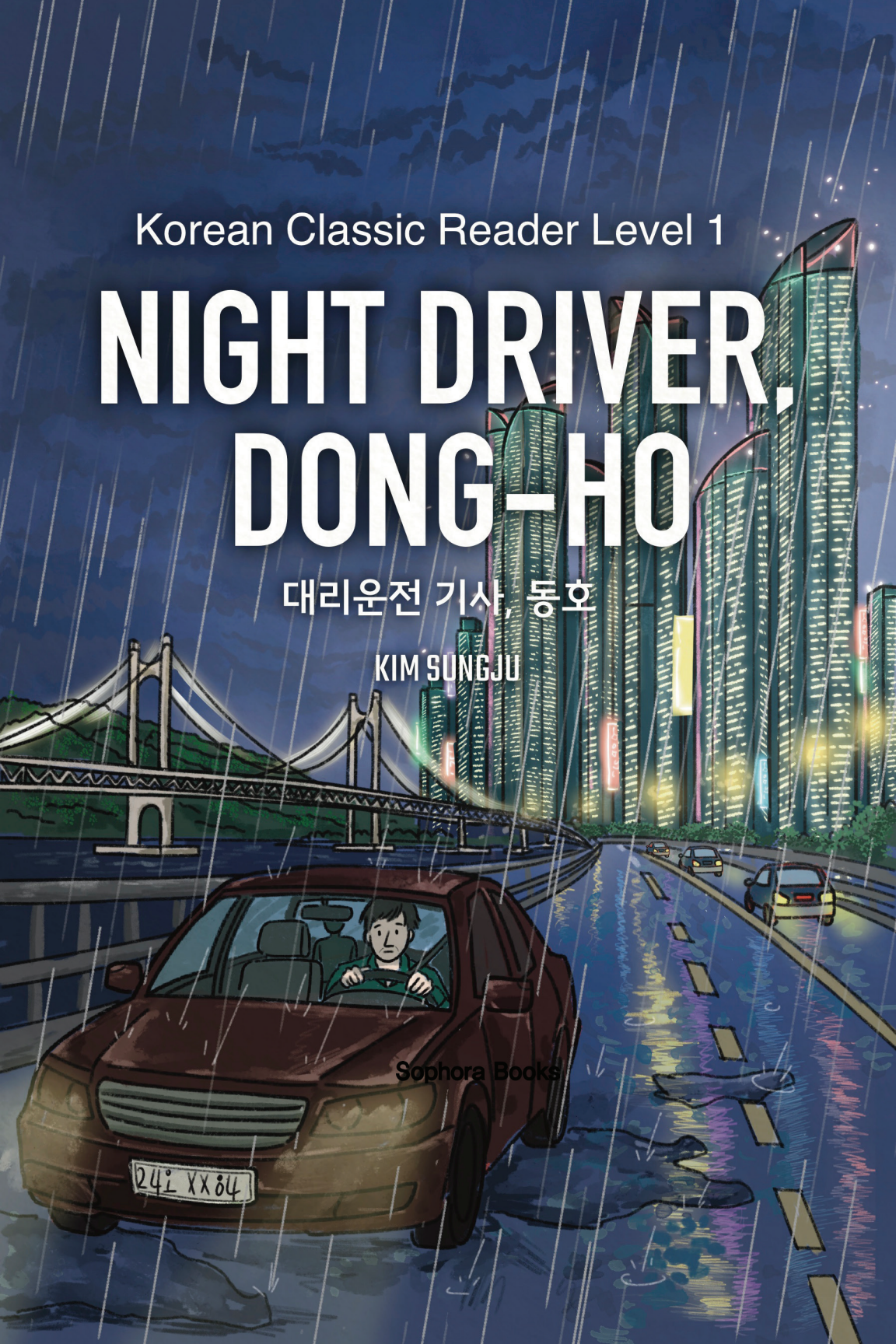
Korean Classic Reader Level 1

NIGHT DRIVER, DONG-HO

대리운전 기사, 동호

KIM SUNGJU



Sophora Books

대리운전 기사, 동호 Night Driver, Dong-ho

Korean Graded Reader — TOPIK I
Korean Edition

Original story — Loosely based on
운수 좋은 날 (A Lucky Day, 1924) by Hyun Jin-geon (현진건)

운수 좋은 날 (A Lucky Day, 1924) by Hyun Jin-geon is in the public domain in the Republic of Korea and internationally.

Written and adapted by Sung-ju Kim
An Official Publication of KoreanMate — koreanmate.net

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Connecting you to your target language through stories

제1부

◎

ABOUT THIS BOOK
General information about this series

Introduction

대리운전 기사, 동호 ***Night Driver, Dong-ho***
A Korean Graded Reader Published by Sophora Books

Welcome to the Sophora Books Graded Reader series — where language learning meets real Korean storytelling.

In this volume, we invite you into 대리운전 기사, 동호 (*Night Driver, Dong-ho*), a modern retelling of 운수 좋은 날 (*A Lucky Day*, 1924) by Hyun Jin-geon, one of Korea's most beloved classic short stories.

The story follows Kang Dong-ho, a 43-year-old designated driver working the streets of Busan on a rainy autumn night in 2018. It is finally a lucky night — customers keep coming, and money keeps flowing. But while Dong-ho drives through the wet city streets, his sick wife Mi-young waits at home, dreaming of a warm bowl of 돼지국밥 *dwaeji-gukbap* (pork rice soup).

This reader is specially designed for Korean learners:

- Uses essential vocabulary based on TOPIK I level
- Repeats key expressions naturally within the story
- Features short, approachable chapters for steady progress
- Includes helpful appendices of key words and cultural notes

We hope this story not only strengthens your Korean reading skills, but also gives you a glimpse into the heart of modern Korean life — one word, one page, one rainy night at a time.

Written and adapted by Sung-Ju Kim. Published by Sophora Books
Available on KoreanMate — koreanmate.net

Adaptation Notes

This story is a modern Korean adaptation inspired by 운수 좋은 날 (*A Lucky Day,* 1924) by Hyun Jin-geon, a pioneering figure in Korean realist literature.

The original story follows a rickshaw puller named Kim Cheomji in 1920s colonial Seoul. On the one day fortune finally smiles on him, tragedy quietly unfolds at home.
In this retelling, we have reimagined the story for the modern world:

Original (1924)	This Retelling (2018)
인력거 | Rickshaw puller	대리운전 기사 | Designated driver
서울 | Seoul	부산 | Busan
설렁탕 | Seolleongtang	돼지국밥 | Dwaeji-gukbap
김첨지 | Kim Cheomji	강동호 | Kang Dong-ho

While the setting and characters have changed, the heart of the story remains the same — the painful irony of a good day that turns into the worst night of one's life.
This book is part of the Sophora Books Graded Reader series, designed for beginning to early intermediate learners of Korean (TOPIK I / A2).

- Vocabulary is carefully selected from TOPIK I level
- Key expressions are naturally repeated for ease of learning
- Each chapter is short and approachable
- A glossary of essential words is included at the back

Who is Sophora Books?

Sophora Books is named after the *Sophora japonica*, also known as the Scholar Tree — a symbol of wisdom and learning in Korea since the Joseon Dynasty.

One day, while walking through a university campus, our founder noticed a particular tree among many others. Its wide, sprawling branches and small, vibrant green leaves exuded a natural elegance. Standing under its shade, she whispered aloud,

"It's so elegant, so beautiful."

The label on the tree read: Sophora japonica — the Scholar Tree.

The Scholar Tree holds deep cultural significance in Korea. During the Joseon Dynasty, it was traditionally planted in schools and academies, symbolizing knowledge and intellectual growth.

At Sophora Books, we believe books are seeds of knowledge — planted with care, nurtured with intention, and destined to grow in the hearts of readers. Just as the Scholar Tree spreads its roots and branches far and wide, we hope our books spread curiosity, wisdom, and a love of learning around the world.

Every book we publish is a seed. Every reader is a garden.

sophorabooks.com

Characters

강동호 Kang Dong-ho
A 43-year-old designated driver working the night streets of Busan. He is a quiet, hardworking man carrying the weight of his family on his shoulders. Tonight, for the first time in a long time, luck seems to be on his side.

이미영 Lee Mi-young
Dong-ho's wife. She has been ill for several months and can barely eat or get out of bed. Her one small wish is a warm bowl of *dwaeji-gukbap* with plenty of chives.

상민이 형 Sang-min
Dong-ho's older friend from the neighbourhood. He runs a small shop in Seomyeon and happens to cross Dong-ho's path late in the night.

Locations

부산 Busan Busan is South Korea's second largest city, located on the southeastern tip of the Korean peninsula. Known for its vibrant nightlife, busy port, and beautiful coastline, Busan is also a city of hard-working, warm-hearted people — the perfect backdrop for Dong-ho's long rainy night.

서면 Seomyeon The heart of Busan. A busy commercial district full of restaurants, bars, and shops. This is where Dong-ho begins and ends his night — and where his favorite 24-hour dwaeji-gukbap restaurant is located.

해운대 Haeundae Busan's most famous beach district, known for its lively nightlife and busy streets. A popular destination for late-night designated driver calls.

남포동 Nampo-dong Busan's old downtown district, known for its traditional markets, street food, and bustling nightlife that keeps drivers busy until dawn.

기장 Gijang A quiet coastal town on the outskirts of Busan. One of the longest — and most profitable — rides of Dong-ho's night.

금정구 Geumjeong-gu A residential and university district in northern Busan. Home to late-night revellers making their way home after a long evening out.

For the cultural story behind each place, see Cultural Note on p.82.

Locations

부산 Busan

Here's where it is on the map:

Connecting you to your target language through stories

제2부

◎

대리운전 기사, 동호

. 1 .

비 오는 날

Track 1

▼

동호는 대리운전 기사였다.

2018년 10월의 어느 밤이었다. 아침부터 비가 내리고[1] 있었다.

동호는 서면 골목[2] 끝에 서 있었다. 그리고 폰 화면을 바라봤다[3]. 손님이 없었다. 동호는 한숨을 쉬었다[4].

'제발 손님 한 명만 와라.'

화면을 새로 고쳤다. 손님이 또 없었다. 다시 새로 고쳤다. 역시[5] 없었다.

1 내리다 v. to fall (rain)
2 골목 n. alley, narrow street
3 바라보다 v. to look at, to gaze at
4 한숨 n. sigh
5 역시 adv. also, as expected

빗소리가 들렸다.

톡,

톡,

톡.

처음에는 작은 소리였다. 그런데 점점 커졌다. 비가 세게 내리고 있었다.

동호는 거리를 봤다. 서면 거리는 어두웠다. 불빛[6]이 빗속에서 흔들렸다.[7] 지나가는 사람도 없었다. 모두 비를 피해[8] 안으로 들어간 것 같았다.

'이런 날은 손님이 없어.'

동호는 작은 소리로 말했다.

동호는 대리운전 기사[9]였다. 나이는 마흔세 살이었다. 손님이 술을 마시고 전화를 하면 달려가서 차를 운전해 주는 일이었다. 보통 밤에 일했다.

---

6 불빛 n. light, glow
7 흔들리다 v. to shake, to sway
8 피하다 v. to avoid, to escape
9 기사 n. chauffeur, professional driver

비 오는 날은 손님이 밖에 나오지 않았다. 그래서 돈을 벌기 어려웠다.

벌써 열흘 동안 손님이 조금씩 줄고 있었다. 주머니가 점점 가벼워졌다.

동호는 휴대폰을 내려놓았다. 그리고 눈을 감았다. 아내 얼굴이 생각났다.

아내 미영은 아팠다. 벌써 몇 달 동안이었다. 밥도 잘 못 먹었고 몸도 잘 못 일으켰다. 며칠 전 미영은 작은 목소리로 말했다.

"여보, 나 국밥 먹고 싶어. 따뜻한 국밥. 부추 많이 넣은 거."

동호는 웃으며 대답했다.

"그래, 곧 사다 줄게."

그런데 아직 못 사줬다. 돈이 없었다.

동호는 다시 휴대폰을 들었다. 화면을 봤다. 그때였다.

띠리링.

알림 소리가 울렸다.[10]

동호는 눈을 크게 떴다. 손님이었다. 서면에서 해운대까지였다. 멀었다. 돈이 되는 손님이었다. 동호는 빠르게 화면을 눌렀다.

'잡았다!'

동호는 손님이 있는 곳으로 달렸다. 동호의 입에 작은 미소[11]가 생겼다.

'오늘은 운이 좋은 날일지도 몰라.'

---

10 알림 소리 n. notification sound

11 미소 n. smile

Further Materials and Other Books

Audiobook

"Scan this QR code to instantly access all Audio tracks."

This graded reader comes with an audiobook to help you practice your speaking and listening skills. Hearing the language will help you become more familiar with intonation, sentence rhythm, and natural pronunciation — essential for understanding Korean in context. This will also support your comprehension when watching or listening to Korean content.

The audiobook is available as a digital download on the Sophora Books website.

https://sophorabooks.com

You can also explore our other books by visiting the website.

Continue with Korean Mate

Reading and listening build your understanding.
Speaking makes it yours.

Korean Mate is our story-based learning platform, where you can read Korean with intonation guides, arrange sentences to test what you know, and record yourself speaking — one story at a time.

https://koreanmate.net

Sophora Books

You've just finished reading a Korean Classic Reader by Sophora Books.

Well done — that took real effort, and we hope you're proud of yourself.

At Sophora Books, we believe that language learning should be joyful, meaningful, and rooted in stories that stay with you.

We hope this story has not only helped you grow your Korean reading skills, but also given you something to feel, reflect on, and carry with you.

There are many more stories waiting for you.

Let's keep reading, together.

https://sophorabooks.com

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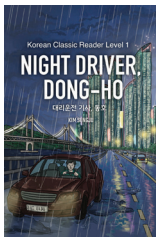
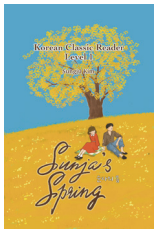
Korean Classics, Retold

The short stories Koreans grow up reading — moved into a Korea you would recognize today.



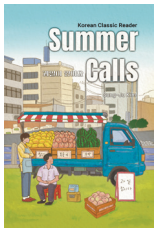
대리운전 기사, 동호 *Night Driver, Dong-ho*

One rainy night in Busan, a substitute driver picks up a passenger who changes everything. Based on 운수 좋은 날, one of the most beloved short stories in Korean literature. (Level 1)



순자의 봄 *Sun-ja's Spring*

After a spring of quarrels with the landlord's daughter, a quiet farm boy in a Jirisan village finally understands what she has been trying to tell him all along. Based on 동백꽃 (Camellias) by Kim Yu-jeong. (Level 1)



과일이 왔어요 *Summer Calls*

Loosely based on When Buckwheat Flowers Bloom by Yi Hyo-seok, this is the story of Cheor-i and a quiet fruit-truck driver. One summer in 1997 Jinju, a memory kept for twenty-three years slowly rises to the surface. (Level 1)

World Classics, Set in Korea

Stories you already know, replanted in Korean soil — Gatsby in Seoul, Jane Eyre in Busan. Knowing where the story goes leaves you free to notice the Korean.

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봄은 다시, 여름으로 첫 번째 이야기
Spring Again, and Summer Part One

Inspired by Jane Austen. Seo-ha navigates friendship, first love,and the moments that change everything. (Level 1)

봄은 다시, 여름으로 두 번째 이야기
Spring Again, and Summer Part Two

The story continues with a time-travel twist as Seo-ha learns to take control of her own destiny. (Level 1)

어둠이 깊어질수록 별은 더욱 빛난다
The Deeper the Darkness, the Brighter the Stars Shine

Inspired by Jane Eyre. Set in modern Busan, young and determined Ji-su carves out her own path. (Level 1)

Connecting you to your target language through stories

대리운전 기사, 동호 (개정판)

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