



# I Have the Right to Destroy Myself (Harvest Original)

By Young-ha Kim

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**I Have the Right to Destroy Myself (Harvest Original)** By Young-ha Kim

In the fast-paced, high-urban landscape of Seoul, C and K are brothers who have fallen in love with the same woman—Se-yeon—who tears at both of them as they all try desperately to find real connection in an atomized world. A spectral, nameless narrator haunts the edges of their lives as he tells of his work helping the lost and hurting find escape through suicide. Dreamlike and beautiful, the South Korea brought forth in this novel is cinematic in its urgency and its reflection of contemporary life everywhere—far beyond the boundaries of the Korean peninsula. Recalling the emotional tension of Milan Kundera and the existential anguish of Bret Easton Ellis, *I Have the Right to Destroy Myself* achieves its author's greatest wish—to show Korean literature as part of an international tradition. Young-ha Kim is a young master, the leading literary voice of his generation.

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## **I Have the Right to Destroy Myself (Harvest Original) By Young-ha Kim Bibliography**

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### Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

Korean novelist Kim's tantalizing 1996 debut novel concerns a calculating, urbane young man who makes a business of helping his clients commit suicide. The narrator's favorite painting, Jacques-Louis David's *The Death of Marat*, encapsulates his outlook—to be detached and cold, an approach reflected in his account of a recent client who was romantically involved with two brothers (called C and K). The woman, Se-yeon, is a young, spacey, lollipop-sucking drifter who first hangs out with K before bedding C. Cab-driver K and video artist C become obsessed with Se-Yeon, who looks (to them) like Gustave Klimt's *Judith*. Judith, as they subsequently refer to her, later wanders off into a snowstorm, never to be seen by the brothers again. However, in this eerie, elliptical narrative, Judith reappears as the narrator's client. Moreover, Judith morphs into other objects of desire, such as a woman from Hong Kong the narrator meets in Vienna and an elusive performance artist named Mimi whom C films. Kim's work is a self-conscious literary exploration of truth, death, desire and identity, and though it traffics in racy themes, it never devolves into base voyeurism. (*July*) Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

From [Booklist](#)

Kim's first novel reeks of 1990s South Korea, whose rising generation was the first to enjoy the freedoms and the attendant anomie of a wealthy society. There are three male and three female protagonists. The men are the narrator and brothers C, a video artist, and K, a taxi driver. The women are Judith (so-called by C, after the biblical heroine as painted by Gustav Klimt), whom K beds first (in C's apartment) but loses to C; a woman the narrator meets in Vienna; and performance artist Mimi, averse to cinematic media but willing to have C tape her. It is eventually disclosed that Judith and Mimi are clients of the narrator, who writes novels, perhaps including this one, but maintains a sideline in promotive rather than preventive suicide counseling. As bleak, chilling, and economically written as Stephen Crane's 1890s classics *Maggie* and *George's Mother*, though with characters miles up the economic scale from Crane's, Kim's deadpan, elliptical story is even more like the enigmatic love (?) stories of Taiwanese filmmaker Tsai Ming-liang, whose work must be watched as raptly as Kim's must be read. Mesmerizing. Olson, Ray

Review

### PRAISE FROM KOREA FOR I HAVE THE RIGHT TO DESTROY MYSELF

"[Kim's] novels are fragments of his amazing imagination. With uncommon creativity, grotesque images, and stories that build on and into each other like a computer game, he perplexes his readers as much as he delights them."—LEADERS KOREA literary magazine

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**Helen Kingsbury:**

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Well, probably you will require this I Have the Right to Destroy Myself (Harvest Original).

**Jennifer Walker:**

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