First idea: Lucid Dream Rescue

Characters:

Sebastian (16): A dark, reclusive high school student who doesn't fit in with any clique and spends most of his time drawing fantastical worlds. He's mysterious, feared and avoided. He emanates a dark aura and often skips school - no one knows why or even cares... but we know... he's dreaming - sometimes for days.

Tobias (16): He's different to Sebastian in nearly every way: popular, attractive, light-hearted... he's practically glowing. An elite sportsman, but not without brains; his academic aptitude has earned him high grades and favour from all his teachers. However, the one attribute he shares with Sebastian is that he too dreams deeply - at least he did when he was a child. But after forming an unlikely friendship with Sebastian - he began to dream again.

Background Story

A football flew through the air with Tobias charging after it determined to make the catch, but before he could... WHACK. Sketching paper burst into a cloud as he knocked into Sebastian who was minding his own business, walking around the track.

This was how they first met – just a silly accident. But when Tobias saw Sebastian's sketches scattered around the ground, he knew that their paths were destined to align.

"These drawings... they're exactly like my childhood dreams," Tobias said.

Sebastian, flustered and nervous, quickly gathered his sketches and ran away.

That night, for the first time since he was a child, Tobias dreamed deeply, and in that dream he saw marvels, magic and monsters and... Sebastian, who played there like the God of that realm.

Together, they spent years in dream time, playing, fighting conquering worlds, acquiring unbelievable power and becoming closer to each other than they had been to anyone else.

In reality, Tobias slept for 48 hours straight, and when he awoke, his mother gasped with relief and held his head tightly into her bosom saying over and over: "it's happening again."

The next day at school, Sebastian was nowhere to be found. When Tobias asked the teachers where he was, most didn't even know who he was talking about. Finally, after over a week of asking, someone from the admin department told him that Sebastian had been absent without authorization for nearly two weeks.

So, he visited the local hospital and asked if there had been any young, pale boys with long dark hair that had been admitted there. To his great distress, there had been. It was Sebastian.

He lay comatose in a hospital bed, in a room filled with other patients.

No one had been to visit him – no family, no friends. Even the nurses and doctors moved around him without consideration, as if he wasn't there. There were odd items like jackets and medical supplies that were placed around him on the bed, as if it were an empty space.

Tobias cleared Sebastian's bed for him and cried by his side, mortified that a child could be entirely without love... forgotten... slipping deeper into death's grasp.

He wiped away his tears and placed a crystal into Sebastian's hand. Tobias's mother had given him this crystal to help him to wake up from his deep dreams, but if anyone needed it then, it was Sebastian.

It was at that moment; Tobias became hell-bent on saving Sebastian.

Game Narrative Overview

Tobias must travel through each layer of the dream world to rescue Sebastian.

Each layer has unique environmental features, enemy types and a boss that is the embodiment of that dream layer.

Upon defeating a boss through combat, Tobias is awarded a new power/ability/weapon, that changes his appearance and helps him to traverse the next layer of the dream.

The deeper Tobias goes, the more the dream world turns into a nightmare world.

In the end, he reaches the final layer and finds Sebastian, who lives there like a demon god. Tobias tries to persuade him to come back to reality. However, Sebastian doesn't want to leave – and doesn't want Tobias to leave either. He wants them to both stay down there and rule the dream world together... playing for eternity.

Tobias refuses, but that's not acceptable to Sebastian who transforms into a mega-boss (perhaps an amalgamation of the other bosses) with Tobias's mother's crystal in his chest.

After defeating Sebastian, the crystal breaks into many pieces that are scattered around the dream world.

Sebastian morphs into a new, even bigger, boss and chases Tobias through all the dream world.

Tobias must take a fragment of the crystal to ascend to a higher layer of the dream world, all whilst fighting the enemies from that layer, traversing the environmental dangers *and* whilst running away from Sebastian mega-boss 2.0.

Finally, Tobias collects all the dream crystal fragments, puts them together and escapes the dream world.

He wakes up in a hospital bed, with his family and friends surrounding him. He's been comatose for 3 weeks.

Though relieved to see him, the question on everyone's lips is "what if it happens again?"

"It won't," Tobias assuredly replies.

But what about Sebastian? He still sleeps. Overlooked by everyone. But in his dreams - he's the master of a lonely kingdom.

OR

Was Sebastian even real? Or was he just the dark side of Tobias fighting for recognition?

Second idea: Lucid Dream Escape

(Note from Narratic: I'll try to be more concise with this one haha.)

Opening image: A character falling through darkness with an overlaid poetic monologue about how tragedy can tear everything you once were away from you.

Characters:

Protagonist: Initially a feral person in a strange dark world filled with vicious creatures, but as the story develops the protagonist learns more about themselves and the life they once lived outside of this world.

Ephemeral Guide: Like a spirit or apparition, this ephemeral being guides the protagonist through the dream world to areas that reveal fragments of the protagonist's past life and helping them to learn the mechanics of the game.

The Suzerain: A dark being that all the creatures of the dream world fear. Its titans (bosses) keep the creatures in their assigned layer of the dream world.

Game Narrative

The protagonist has been in the darkness now for God knows how long. He's become nearly indistinguishable from the creatures that try to eat him every day.

But one day, he sees a wisp of blue light that guides him to a cave, and in that cave is the largest creature he's ever seen.

They fight, and although it was tough, he tears the creature open, and from its chest, pulls out a shining crystal.

The crystal imbues him with the special ability/weapon/power of the creature that he just defeated and permits him access to the next layer of the dream world.

(Like in the last idea) each layer of the dream world has its own unique environment and enemy types that share some common strengths and weaknesses. However, as he ascends, both he and the environments become more advanced. Initially he is fighting creatures with a bone-sword and clumsy skills, but towards the end he is using advanced weaponry against highly intelligent beings.

As the game progresses, he learns more and more about his past life through fragments of information and relics that appear in strange ways:

An answering-machine message is heard from a bird.

A name tag floats to the top of a mysterious pond.

An empty bottle of medicine falls out of the sky like a comet.

As we slowly put the pieces together, we discover that the Ephemeral Guide is actually a dream manifestation of his/her dead wife/husband, trying to guide the protagonist out of their deep depression sleep.

The Suzerain is actually an aspect of himself that wants to keep him in the dream world to avoid confronting his feelings in reality.

Each boss can be representative of a different dark aspect of his life.

In the end he must decide whether he wants to return to the real world and face his harsh reality, or take over as the Suzerain, and rule the dream world with all the power he has acquired.