\*\*CHAPTER START\*\*  
  
<h1>Solo Leveling - Chapter 10</h1>  
  
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<p>Chapter 10</p>  
  
<p>It was then.</p>  
  
<p>\*Sssssss...\*</p>  
  
<p>Suddenly, the sand beside him began to sink, forming a slope.</p>  
  
<p>"Wh-what?!"</p>  
  
<p>Jin-Woo desperately struggled to keep from being sucked into the sand.</p>  
  
<p>The sand pit began to widen, and eventually, Jin-Woo had to use both hands to barely climb out.</p>  
  
<p>"Huff, huff, huff."</p>  
  
<p>Sitting on the ground, he gasped for breath and looked down.</p>  
  
<p>Strangely, the sand near the bottom of the pit was bubbling as if boiling.</p>  
  
<p>The thought of slipping all the way down there with just one misstep sent a chill down his spine.</p>  
  
<p>"Wait..."</p>  
  
<p>Hold on.</p>  
  
<p>Jin-Woo's eyes sharpened.</p>  
  
<p>"It’s not boiling."</p>  
  
<p>Upon closer inspection, something large was wriggling beneath the sand.</p>  
  
<p>Instinctively, Jin-Woo stood up.</p>  
  
<p>He had a bad feeling.</p>  
  
<p>Sure enough, as he cautiously stepped back, the sand suddenly erupted into the air.</p>  
  
<p>\*Whoooosh!\*</p>  
  
<p>The sound of a waterfall, but made of sand.</p>  
  
<p>Jin-Woo's eyes widened.</p>  
  
<p>"A... bug?"</p>  
  
<p>What emerged from the sand was a giant centipede.</p>  
  
<p>\*Screeeech!\*</p>  
  
<p>The fully revealed creature’s head was as high as a five-story building.</p>  
  
<p>Jin-Woo gulped.</p>  
  
<p>'This can’t be real...'</p>  
  
<p>It was undeniably, unrealistically huge.</p>  
  
<p>He had never heard of a centipede of this size existing in the world.</p>  
  
<p>But what shocked Jin-Woo wasn’t just the centipede’s size.</p>  
  
<p>"Why is there... a name floating above its head?"</p>  
  
<p>Was he dreaming?</p>  
  
<p>Jin-Woo closed and opened his eyes, but nothing changed. The red, nine-letter name still hovered above the centipede’s head.</p>  
  
<p>Like a monster in a game.</p>  
  
<p>'Venom-Fanged Giant Sand Centipede.'</p>  
  
<p>The name was as grotesque and repulsive as its appearance.</p>  
  
<p>What particularly caught his attention were the words 'Venom-Fanged.'</p>  
  
<p>He noticed two fangs, each the size of a child, attached to the lower part of its head.</p>  
  
<p>Just by looking at its name, he could easily guess what would happen if he got stabbed by those.</p>  
  
<p>Watching those massive fangs and jaws open and close incessantly, it almost seemed like...</p>  
  
<p>"It’s savoring its meal."</p>  
  
<p>Then, the sound echoed in his mind again.</p>  
  
<p>\*Ding.\*</p>  
  
<p>[Penalty Quest: Survival]</p>  
  
<p>Objective: Survive until the required time.</p>  
  
<p>Required Time: 4 hours.</p>  
  
<p>Remaining Time: 4 hours 0 minutes 0 seconds.</p>  
  
<p>'You’ve got to be kidding...'</p>  
  
<p>But as the remaining time changed to 3 hours 49 minutes 59 seconds, the centipede charged through the sand as if it had been waiting.</p>  
  
<p>\*Whooshwhooshwhoosh!\*</p>  
  
<p>"What the?!"</p>  
  
<p>Jin-Woo immediately turned and started running.</p>  
  
<p>There was no time to think.</p>  
  
<p>If he wanted to live, he had to run!</p>  
  
<p>That was the only thought in his mind.</p>  
  
<p>But after only a few steps, another sand pillar erupted in front of him.</p>  
  
<p>\*Whooosh!\*</p>  
  
<p>"Ahhh!"</p>  
  
<p>Jin-Woo was blown back by the intense pressure.</p>  
  
<p>Rolling on the ground, he quickly got up and frantically brushed the sand off his face, only to widen his eyes in shock.</p>  
  
<p>This time, it wasn’t just one or two.</p>  
  
<p>\*Whooosh!\*</p>  
  
<p>\*Whooosh!\*</p>  
  
<p>Seven sand centipedes had emerged from the sand and were now staring down at him.</p>  
  
<p>\*Screeeech!\*</p>  
  
<p>\*Screeeech!\*</p>  
  
<p>Beneath the screeching centipedes, Jin-Woo’s face turned pale.</p>  
  
<p>"Damn it..."</p>  
  
<p>---</p>  
  
<p>Jin-Woo reappeared in the hospital room exactly four hours later.</p>  
  
<p>\*Thud.\*</p>  
  
<p>He collapsed onto the floor, coughing painfully.</p>  
  
<p>"Cough, cough. Ptoo! Ptoo!"</p>  
  
<p>His mouth felt gritty, and his eyes stung.</p>  
  
<p>After groaning for a while, Jin-Woo finally sprawled out on the floor.</p>  
  
<p>He didn’t even have the strength to move a finger.</p>  
  
<p>"Huff... huff... What the... hell...?"</p>  
  
<p>As he gasped for breath, a new message appeared.</p>  
  
<p>\*Ding.\*</p>  
  
<p>[You have completed the 'Penalty Quest.']</p>  
  
<p>Jin-Woo frowned.</p>  
  
<p>Penalty Quest?</p>  
  
<p>Did I do something to deserve this?</p>  
  
<p>As he tried to recall, he remembered the [Daily Quest] he had left unfinished the day before.</p>  
  
<p>'No way...?'</p>  
  
<p>Come to think of it, it did mention that failing to complete the quest would result in a corresponding penalty.</p>  
  
<p>"Huff, huff, so... that wasn’t a delusion?"</p>  
  
<p>It wasn’t a delusion.</p>  
  
<p>It wasn’t a dream either.</p>  
  
<p>He didn’t need to pinch his cheek to confirm it.</p>  
  
<p>When he was running, he was out of breath, and the pain from being scratched by the centipede’s legs was still vivid.</p>  
  
<p>Everything was real.</p>  
  
<p>He almost died.</p>  
  
<p>"This is too much... huff... huff..."</p>  
  
<p>So this was what the penalty was—throwing someone into a life-threatening situation.</p>  
  
<p>At the same time, a foreboding feeling washed over him.</p>  
  
<p>If all of this was really because of that Daily Quest, it didn’t seem like this would be the last time.</p>  
  
<p>Sure enough, the mechanical sound rang out again.</p>  
  
<p>\*Ding.\*</p>  
  
<p>He flinched, but thankfully, it wasn’t another quest.</p>  
  
<p>[The reward for completing the Penalty Quest has arrived.]</p>  
  
<p>[Would you like to check the reward?] (Y/N)</p>  
  
<p>'Reward...?'</p>  
  
<p>The word 'reward' caught his eye.</p>  
  
<p>But the problem was that he didn’t have the energy to check anything right now.</p>  
  
<p>It was impossible in his current state.</p>  
  
<p>'Reward or not... I need to rest first...'</p>  
  
<p>His vision began to blur.</p>  
  
<p>Soon, Jin-Woo fell into a deep sleep, as if he had passed out.</p>  
  
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<p>"Oh my! What happened here?"</p>  
  
<p>The next morning, the nurse who entered the room was shocked.</p>  
  
<p>The patient was lying on the floor, and the surroundings were covered in sand.</p>  
  
<p>The patient’s body and clothes were also covered in sand.</p>  
  
<p>The nurse threw the medical chart onto the bed and urgently pressed the call button.</p>  
  
<p>"Someone, help!"</p>  
  
<p>Soon, the attending physician rushed into the room.</p>  
  
<p>"What’s going on? What happened to Mr. Sung Jin-Woo?"</p>  
  
<p>"I don’t know. He was fine last night, but this morning he’s like this."</p>  
  
<p>"Let’s get him onto the bed, one, two!"</p>  
  
<p>The two of them lifted Jin-Woo onto the bed.</p>  
  
<p>In the process, Jin-Woo’s hand was slightly scraped by the edge of the medical chart left on the bed, but no one noticed.</p>  
  
<p>"Let’s see."</p>  
  
<p>The doctor examined Jin-Woo’s condition.</p>  
  
<p>But there was nothing unusual.</p>  
  
<p>"What... He’s just sleeping?"</p>  
  
<p>The doctor let out a sigh of relief.</p>  
  
<p>This was a patient the Hunters Association had specifically asked them to take good care of.</p>  
  
<p>He had been worried that something might have happened.</p>  
  
<p>"Let’s leave him to sleep. He seems to be in a deep slumber."</p>  
  
<p>The doctor was about to leave when he glanced around and scratched the side of his head with his index finger.</p>  
  
<p>"But this room... It needs a good cleaning. Ms. Yoora, could you take care of the cleanup here?"</p>  
  
<p>"Yes, Doctor."</p>  
  
<p>As the doctor left the room, Nurse Choi Yoora let out a sigh.</p>  
  
<p>It was a relief that it wasn’t anything serious.</p>  
  
<p>No doctor or nurse wished for their patients to get worse, even if they weren’t as concerned as the patients or their families.</p>  
  
<p>Especially in a Hunter-designated hospital, where many critically injured patients were admitted.</p>  
  
<p>She didn’t want any more of her patients to suffer.</p>  
  
<p>"Whew."</p>  
  
<p>After calming down a bit, she began to think about where to start cleaning the room when she accidentally noticed a drop of blood on the floor.</p>  
  
<p>"Huh?"</p>  
  
<p>The blood was dripping from the tip of the patient’s hand, which was hanging off the bed.</p>  
  
<p>Startled, she quickly examined Jin-Woo’s hand for wounds and turned it over.</p>  
  
<p>"What...?"</p>  
  
<p>There were traces of blood, but no wound where it should have been.</p>  
  
<p>Even after wiping away the blood, no wound was visible.</p>  
  
<p>'Could it be... that the wound healed already?'</p>  
  
<p>Yoora carefully observed Jin-Woo’s complexion with trembling hands.</p>  
  
<p>Jin-Woo was still sound asleep.</p>  
  
<p>7. Daily Quest.</p>  
  
<p>\*Ding.\*</p>  
  
<p>[A Daily Quest has arrived.]</p>  
  
<p>Jin-Woo’s eyes shot open.</p>  
  
<p>He sat up abruptly and first checked the time. The clock had just passed 4:30 PM.</p>  
  
<p>There were still 7 hours and 30 minutes left until midnight.</p>  
  
<p>'Good.'</p>  
  
<p>Jin-Woo opened the message box.</p>  
  
<p>\*Ding.\*</p>  
  
<p>[Daily Quest: Preparation to Become Stronger]</p>  
  
<p>Push-ups 100 times: Incomplete (0/100)</p>  
  
<p>Sit-ups 100 times: Incomplete (0/100)</p>  
  
<p>Squats 100 times: Incomplete (0/100)</p>  
  
<p>Running 10km: Incomplete (0/10)</p>  
  
<p>※Warning: Failure to complete the Daily Quest will result in a corresponding penalty.</p>  
  
<p>"Again?"</p>  
  
<p>The words slipped out reflexively.</p>  
  
<p>But perhaps it was for the best.</p>  
  
<p>Rather than an impossible or cryptic quest, this was better.</p>  
  
<p>Even if it was physically demanding, it was something he could complete if he put in the time.</p>  
  
<p>Jin-Woo got down on the floor and started doing push-ups.</p>  
  
<p>"One."</p>  
  
<p>He couldn’t afford to be dragged into another dangerous situation and pushed to the brink of death again.</p>  
  
<p>"Two."</p>  
  
<p>Last night, he was lucky to survive, but there was no guarantee he’d be as lucky today.</p>  
  
<p>"Three."</p>  
  
<p>He glanced at the quest details and noticed that the count was being recorded with each push-up.</p>  
  
<p>\*Ding.\*</p>  
  
<p>[You have successfully completed 1 push-up.]</p>  
  
<p>[Push-ups 100 times: Incomplete (7/100)]</p>  
  
<p>\*Ding.\*</p>  
  
<p>[You have successfully completed 1 push-up.]</p>  
  
<p>[Push-ups 100 times: Incomplete (8/100)]</p>  
  
<p>Curious, he tried doing a half push-up, but as expected, it didn’t count.</p>  
  
<p>Now he understood why the count didn’t register yesterday.</p>  
  
<p>Only proper push-ups were recorded.</p>  
  
<p>'Ugh... seriously.'</p>  
  
<p>Despite his frustration, Jin-Woo didn’t let up on the pressure in his arms.</p>  
  
<p>He still had 50 push-ups left.</p>  
  
<p>After that, sit-ups, squats, and running awaited him.</p>  
  
<p>Three hours later.</p>  
  
<p>Push-ups 100 times: Complete (100/100)</p>  
  
<p>Sit-ups 100 times: Complete (100/100)</p>  
  
<p>Squats 100 times: Complete (100/100)</p>  
  
<p>Running 10km: Incomplete (9/10)</p>  
  
<p>"Huff, huff, huff, huff."</p>  
  
<p>After running a lap around the hospital, Jin-Woo bent over in front of his room, gasping for breath.</p>  
  
<p>His heart felt like it was about to burst, but he couldn’t stop now.</p>  
  
<p>'After all the effort I’ve put in...'</p>  
  
<p>He barely managed to open the door and take a step inside.</p>  
  
<p>Then.</p>  
  
<p>\*Ding.\*</p>  
  
<p>[Distance run so far: 10km]</p>  
  
<p>[You have completed running 10km.]</p>  
  
<p>It was finally over.</p>  
  
<p>"Huff... huff..."</p>  
  
<p>Jin-Woo collapsed to his knees. His mouth was dry, and his forehead and back were drenched in sweat.</p>  
  
<p>"Huff... huff..."</p>  
  
<p>As he caught his breath, a familiar message arrived.</p>  
  
<p>\*Ding.\*</p>  
  
<p>[You have completed the 'Daily Quest: Preparation to Become Stronger.']</p>  
  
<p>[The completion reward has arrived.]</p>  
  
<p>[Would you like to check the reward?] (Y/N)</p>  
  
<p>For a moment, Jin-Woo considered just collapsing like yesterday.</p>  
  
<p>But then he changed his mind.</p>  
  
<p>This time, he wanted to see what this so-called reward was.</p>  
  
<p>"Check."</p>  
  
<p>\*Ding.\*</p>  
  
<p>[The following rewards are prepared.]</p>  
  
<p>Reward 1. Status Recovery</p>  
  
<p>Reward 2. Stat Points +3</p>  
  
<p>Reward 3. Random Box x1</p>  
  
<p>[Would you like to accept all?]</p>  
  
<p>'Why are there so many?'</p>  
  
<p>At first, he thought that vaguely as he looked at the reward list.</p>  
  
<p>But upon closer inspection, some rewards seemed quite useful, while others left him curious about their exact meaning.</p>  
  
<p>First, Reward 1, Status Recovery, was urgent.</p>  
  
<p>He was on the verge of collapsing from exhaustion.</p>  
  
<p>Since the penalty for failure was real, the completion reward was likely real too.</p>  
  
<p>It was worth a shot, wasn’t it?</p>  
  
<p>Surely, they wouldn’t throw him back into the penalty zone after giving him a reward.</p>  
  
<p>"Accept."</p>  
  
\*\*CHAPTER END\*\*