<h1>Solo Leveling - Chapter 12</h1>  
  
<p>'Still, just in case...'</p>  
<p>Just in case, I posted an anonymous message on a Hunter-exclusive forum.</p>  
<p>[Title: Something strange has happened.]</p>  
<p>[Content: Suddenly, I can see stats like in a game, and I can increase them. Is there anyone else experiencing the same thing?]</p>  
<p>Comments flooded beneath it.</p>  
<p>└Anonymous: LOL, you’re really going crazy, huh?</p>  
<p>└Anonymous: Are you just insane?</p>  
<p>└Anonymous: You’ve lost it.</p>  
<p>└Anonymous: You’ve played too many games...</p>  
<p>└Anonymous: Are you a comic artist?</p>  
<p>└Anonymous: Go to the nearest hospital ASAP.</p>  
<p>└Anonymous: I’d like to hear the details.</p>  
<p>└Anonymous: Just because you have a license doesn’t mean you should take in anyone and everyone. The forum needs a complete overhaul...</p>  
<p>The dozens of comments were all similar in tone.</p>  
<p>"Sigh—"</p>  
<p>Jin-Woo let out a deep breath.</p>  
<p>Despite spending quite a lot of time, there was nothing worthwhile to gain.</p>  
<p>On the forum, he was labeled as a lunatic and even ridiculed.</p>  
<p>If after all this, there’s still no information...</p>  
<p>"I guess I’m the only one."</p>  
<p>Unique and one of a kind.</p>  
<p>The only Hunter in the world!</p>  
<p>How much this phenomenon will help me, or where the limit of my growth lies, will take more time to see, but for now, it didn’t sound too bad.</p>  
<p>Looking around, it was already late at night.</p>  
<p>"When did it get so late...?"</p>  
<p>Jin-Woo furrowed his brows.</p>  
<p>Having stayed late in front of the monitor, his eyes were blurry.</p>  
<p>Rubbing his forehead, Jin-Woo stood up and stretched to loosen his body.</p>  
<p>After moving around a few times, he noticed two boxes on the floor.</p>  
<p>"Ah."</p>  
<p>Random Boxes.</p>  
<p>Two small boxes wrapped in monochromatic wrapping paper tied with ribbons, the kind you’d see in games.</p>  
<p>'They must’ve fallen off the bed during the earlier commotion.'</p>  
<p>He had completely forgotten about the boxes he received as rewards.</p>  
<p>Jin-Woo picked up one of the boxes nearby and opened it.</p>  
<p>"...Band-Aids?"</p>  
<p>Staring intently at what looked like a Band-Aid, green text appeared with information.</p>  
<p>[Item: Band-Aid]</p>  
<p>A regular Band-Aid, good for small wounds. Can be stored in the inventory.</p>  
<p>"It’s really just a Band-Aid."</p>  
<p>He had hoped it might have some special function, like treasures found in dungeons, but it didn’t.</p>  
<p>'Well, I’ve never heard of Band-Aids dropping in dungeons...'</p>  
<p>Disappointed yet still hopeful, Jin-Woo opened the other box.</p>  
<p>A pen came out.</p>  
<p>He examined it thoroughly, even clicking the pen to make the tip pop out, but it was just a regular ballpoint pen.</p>  
<p>[Item: Ballpoint Pen]</p>  
<p>A regular ballpoint pen, good for taking notes. Can be stored in the inventory.</p>  
<p>Apparently, Random Boxes literally drop random miscellaneous items.</p>  
<p>"Hmm..."</p>  
<p>But it wasn’t a total loss.</p>  
<p>Although he didn’t need Band-Aids or pens, thanks to these two, he now knew about the existence of the inventory.</p>  
<p>Looking at other items in the room, which didn’t trigger any information, it seemed only items from Random Boxes had this feature.</p>  
<p>"Inventory."</p>  
<p>When he summoned the inventory, a graphical warehouse with dozens of slots appeared in the air.</p>  
<p>As expected of a Level 1 user, the warehouse was mostly empty... except for one familiar item in the first slot.</p>  
<p>"What’s that...?"</p>  
<p>Jin-Woo took it out.</p>  
<p>\*Ding.\*</p>  
<p>[Item: Kim Sang-Shik’s Steel Sword]</p>  
<p>Attack Power +10.</p>  
<p>It was the sword from Mr. Kim that he had picked up in the underground temple.</p>  
<p>He thought he’d left it behind in the Gate.</p>  
<p>"Good to see you, buddy."</p>  
<p>Jin-Woo couldn’t help but smile.</p>  
<p>Having gone through life and death together, it felt good to see it again.</p>  
<p>And it was also an item too valuable to leave behind in that space.</p>  
<p>'Didn’t Mr. Kim say he bought this thing for 3 million won?'</p>  
<p>Hunters’ weapons may look ordinary, but they’re anything but.</p>  
<p>Magic Beasts can only be hurt by weapons imbued with mana. Naturally, weapons made to fight such creatures are expensive.</p>  
<p>'I’ll have to use this for a while.'</p>  
<p>He had been fighting bare-handed because he couldn’t afford a Hunter’s weapon.</p>  
<p>A cheap longsword was better than nothing.</p>  
<p>'It’s mine now.'</p>  
<p>Mr. Kim might come chasing after him, foaming at the mouth, demanding it back.</p>  
<p>Given how selfish he was, abandoning the person who saved him and running away.</p>  
<p>But both this sword and this opportunity were earned at the cost of his life.</p>  
<p>He had no intention of giving it back easily.</p>  
<p>Jin-Woo’s eyes hardened.</p>  
<p>In the underground temple, Jin-Woo learned two things.</p>  
<p>One was that he had to get stronger.</p>  
<p>He had nearly died multiple times because he was weak.</p>  
<p>That wasn’t all.</p>  
<p>Even though he knew the outcome, he didn’t stop the choir boy, and even though he knew Mr. Kim’s demand was unfair, he couldn’t help Mr. Song.</p>  
<p>To survive, he turned a blind eye to what was right.</p>  
<p>To avoid shame, he had to become stronger.</p>  
<p>And the second thing.</p>  
<p>'There’s no need for unnecessary kindness.'</p>  
<p>Behind kindness came betrayal from his comrades.</p>  
<p>Three of his comrades ran away, leaving him behind when he was immobilized.</p>  
<p>He called out desperately, but no one came back.</p>  
<p>They didn’t remember who had saved their lives.</p>  
<p>'Give and take.'</p>  
<p>From now on, he wouldn’t invite danger with unconditional goodwill.</p>  
<p>Above all, his own life was the most important.</p>  
<p>That was the lesson Jin-Woo could only learn at the brink of death.</p>  
<p>Stronger and more ruthless.</p>  
<p>"I can do it."</p>  
<p>Jin-Woo was one of those people who rarely forgot what they’d learned.</p>  
<p>\*\*\*</p>  
<p>Inside a street tent.</p>  
<p>Yoora Choi, a nurse, was catching up with a friend she hadn’t seen in a while, late into the night.</p>  
<p>"Oh, right."</p>  
<p>Yoora suddenly remembered that her friend worked at the Hunters Association.</p>  
<p>It was thanks to her friend that she had been able to get into a Hunter-designated large hospital.</p>  
<p>"You know a lot about Hunters, right?"</p>  
<p>"As much as anyone else. Why?"</p>  
<p>"Is there a Hunter who has the ability to heal wounds quickly?"</p>  
<p>"Healer-type Hunters can do that. One healing spell, and any wound is gone!"</p>  
<p>"No, no. Not magic. Unconsciously."</p>  
<p>"Unconsciously?"</p>  
<p>"For example, if they’re unconscious or... asleep."</p>  
<p>Her friend shook her head.</p>  
<p>"No way. That’s regeneration, an incredible ability that even among high-grade Magic Beasts, only special ones have."</p>  
<p>"And no humans have it?"</p>  
<p>"Nope. I’ve never heard of a Hunter with that ability."</p>  
<p>"I... see?"</p>  
<p>Was she mistaken?</p>  
<p>Yoora nodded slowly.</p>  
<p>Then her friend added,</p>  
<p>"But... I don’t know, maybe S-rank Hunters could."</p>  
<p>Yoora looked up at her friend’s words.</p>  
<p>"S-rank?"</p>  
<p>"S-rank Hunters are often monstrous, and there’s not much public information about them. What was it? Baek Yoonho from the White Tiger Guild can transform into a real monster."</p>  
<p>But Sung Jin-Woo was an E-rank Hunter.</p>  
<p>Hunter ranks were publicly available on the Association’s website, so anyone could easily look them up.</p>  
<p>Curious about what had happened earlier that morning, Yoora went to the Association’s website to learn more about Sung Jin-Woo.</p>  
<p>'For someone with such a special ability, his rank is too low... Oh!'</p>  
<p>Hunter Reawakening!</p>  
<p>Come to think of it, just yesterday or the day before, she had overheard talk about reawakening near Jin-Woo’s hospital room.</p>  
<p>'Could he have reawakened into a high-rank Hunter?'</p>  
<p>Ordinary people rarely even get to meet S-rank Hunters, let alone become friends with them.</p>  
<p>The number of S-rank Hunters was extremely small, and they were all insanely busy.</p>  
<p>But here she was, with such an important person as her patient.</p>  
<p>An E-rank Hunter who had just become S-rank.</p>  
<p>'If not many people know his true value yet...'</p>  
<p>If she could gain his favor now, maybe she’d have an opportunity.</p>  
<p>Chances to build a relationship with an S-rank Hunter didn’t come easily.</p>  
<p>These were people others would pay just to meet.</p>  
<p>As her imagination soared, a smile gradually spread across Yoora’s face.</p>  
<p>"Oh my, what’s got you so happy? You’re grinning in the middle of our talk."</p>  
<p>"Oh, it’s nothing. Really, nothing."</p>  
<p>Yoora shook her head repeatedly, but the smile on her face didn’t vanish easily.</p>  
<p>8. Level Up!</p>  
<p>"Oh my, look at him."</p>  
<p>"Was that patient’s body always that good?"</p>  
<p>Two young nurses whispered as they passed Jin-Woo in the hallway.</p>  
<p>Jin-Woo pretended not to hear and headed back to his room.</p>  
<p>A week into his daily quests, changes were starting to appear.</p>  
<p>One of them was the change in his body.</p>  
<p>Jin-Woo stood in front of the full-length mirror in the corner of his room.</p>  
<p>"Hmm, hmm."</p>  
<p>He examined his physique in the mirror.</p>  
<p>Feeling a bit silly doing something more fitting for a college girl, he cleared his throat a few times before finally facing the mirror directly.</p>  
<p>But still... something had changed.</p>  
<p>His body was transforming.</p>  
<p>'Muscles have developed.'</p>  
<p>The most noticeable change was the increase in muscle mass.</p>  
<p>Fat had disappeared, and muscles were starting to grow.</p>  
<p>As a result, his shoulders had broadened, and his overall physique had become larger.</p>  
<p>'But I don’t look sluggish.'</p>  
<p>Muscles where needed, in the right amount.</p>  
<p>Overall, he’d describe it as ‘lean and toned.’</p>  
<p>Even he, a man, thought it looked good, so it was no wonder the young nurses were gossiping behind his back.</p>  
<p>'This must be why.'</p>  
<p>Jin-Woo summoned the status window.</p>  
<p>\*Ding.\*</p>  
<p>Name: Sung Jin-Woo</p>  
<p>Level: 1</p>  
<p>Job: None</p>  
<p>Title: None</p>  
<p>HP: 100</p>  
<p>MP: 10</p>  
<p>Fatigue: 0</p>  
<p>[Stats]</p>  
<p>Strength: 31 Stamina: 10 Agility: 10 Intelligence: 10 Senses: 10</p>  
<p>(Available Stat Points: 0)</p>  
<p>[Skills]</p>  
<p>Passive Skills: (Unknown) Lv.MAX, Endurance Lv.1</p>  
<p>Active Skills: Dash Lv.1</p>  
<p>His strength had already surpassed 30.</p>  
<p>Since he didn’t know the efficiency of other stats, he had focused on strength, which showed clear results.</p>  
<p>Strength was the most helpful when hunting Magic Beasts.</p>  
<p>'There’s no way my physique could change just from a few days of exercise.'</p>  
<p>Then there’s only one possibility.</p>  
<p>With his strength stat continuously increasing, his muscles were transforming to maximize efficiency.</p>  
<p>Other reasons were hard to guess.</p>  
<p>For a moment, he worried if he had invested too much in strength, but seeing his changed body, he felt satisfied, and the worry disappeared.</p>  
<p>'But it’s getting a bit too noticeable.'</p>  
<p>The nurses were talking about him more and more often.</p>  
<p>Being in a profession that dealt with the human body, they had a keen eye for such changes.</p>  
<p>With his sharp hearing, Jin-Woo didn’t miss whenever his name came up nearby.</p>  
<p>'Is it about time to leave?'</p>  
  
\*\*CHAPTER END\*\*