\*\*CHAPTER START\*\*  
  
<h1>Solo Leveling - Chapter 14</h1>  
  
---  
  
<p>Chapter 14</p>  
  
---  
  
<p>The Lycan that had leaped over Jin-Woo’s head saw the scene and began to tuck its tail, hesitating before slowly backing away.</p>  
<p>“Huh…?”</p>  
<p>Was this the result of focusing all my points on Strength?</p>  
<p>As Jin-Woo stood in shock, unable to close his mouth, the headless Lycan’s legs trembled before it finally stopped moving.</p>  
<p>Then, a familiar mechanical sound rang out.</p>  
<p>\*Ding\*</p>  
<p>[You have defeated the Steel-Fanged Lycan.]</p>  
<p>[Your Level has increased!]</p>  
<p>\*\*\*</p>  
<p>“My Level increased?”</p>  
<p>To confirm he hadn’t misheard, Jin-Woo quickly opened his Status Window.</p>  
  
<p>\*\*Name:\*\* Sung Jin-Woo   
\*\*Level:\*\* 2   
\*\*Job:\*\* None   
\*\*Title:\*\* None   
\*\*HP:\*\* 205   
\*\*MP:\*\* 22   
\*\*Fatigue:\*\* 0   
  
\*\*[Stats]\*\*   
\*\*Strength:\*\* 32   
\*\*Stamina:\*\* 11   
\*\*Agility:\*\* 11   
\*\*Intelligence:\*\* 11   
\*\*Senses:\*\* 11   
\*(Distributable Stat Points: 0)\*   
  
\*\*[Skills]\*\*   
\*\*Passive Skills:\*\* (Unknown) Lv.MAX, Endurance Lv.1   
\*\*Active Skill:\*\* Dash Lv.1</p>  
  
<p>It was true. His Level had indeed increased.</p>  
<p>And with the Level up, all his Stats had increased by 1 point.</p>  
<p>It wasn’t just Quest rewards that could affect Stats. Leveling up also increased the Stats in the Status Window.</p>  
<p>‘So Leveling up is possible!’</p>  
<p>Something he had only dared to hope for had now become a reality right before his eyes. His heart began to beat faster.</p>  
<p>‘Moreover, the points from Leveling up are even higher.’</p>  
<p>The total Stat points from completing a Quest were 3. The total Stat points from Leveling up were 5.</p>  
<p>Although it was inconvenient that he couldn’t freely distribute the points, the growth from Leveling up was significantly greater.</p>  
<p>Additionally, while Quests could only be completed once per day, there seemed to be no limit to Leveling up.</p>  
<p>‘I only killed two, and my Level increased.’</p>  
<p>It’s the same in games. In the lower Levels, you can Level up quickly in a short amount of time.</p>  
<p>Currently, Jin-Woo’s Level was 2. It wasn’t an exaggeration to say he was at the very bottom.</p>  
<p>But this wasn’t your average low Level. His Strength Stat had already surpassed 30.</p>  
<p>Assuming his Strength increased by 1 with each Level, Jin-Woo’s current Strength was equivalent to someone above Level 20.</p>  
<p>What happens when a user with Level 20 Stats hunts in a Level 1 hunting ground?</p>  
<p>‘Absolute over-Leveling…’</p>  
<p>As if to prove this assumption, the destructive power of his punch earlier had far exceeded his expectations.</p>  
<p>‘Even though my Strength Stat only tripled… the difference in power wasn’t just triple.’</p>  
<p>Jin-Woo’s original Strength Stat was 10. Strength 10 and Strength 30 are a threefold difference in numbers, but the actual difference in power was much greater than that.</p>  
<p>‘Perhaps…?’</p>  
<p>What if Stats have a multiplier effect as they increase? Then this level of destructive power would make perfect sense.</p>  
<p>Moreover, his movements had become faster than before.</p>  
<p>Previously, it would have been impossible for him to dodge a beast’s attack while charging at full speed or to hear the sound of splitting air when throwing a punch.</p>  
<p>“Well, if muscle strength increases, speed naturally follows.”</p>  
<p>Increasing his Strength Stat had boosted both his ‘power’ and ‘speed.’ This was proven in his battles with the Lycans.</p>  
<p>So, what would happen if he increased his Agility? It sparked his curiosity, but there was no way to know for now. To find out, he’d have to raise the Stat himself.</p>  
<p>‘Still…’</p>  
<p>He thought it would be a waste to invest the Quest reward points into Agility. If investing in Strength could increase both power and speed, why bother putting points into Agility?</p>  
<p>That left only one option.</p>  
<p>‘Level up as fast as possible.’</p>  
<p>Increase Agility through Leveling up. They say even dust can pile up to form a mountain. If I keep increasing it bit by bit, I’ll eventually feel the difference.</p>  
<p>Jin-Woo pulled the sword embedded in the ground.</p>  
<p>‘Then, shall we begin?’</p>  
<p>There was still one more creature left to kill.</p>  
<p>“But… where did that guy go?”</p>  
<p>A Lycan that had been nearby just a moment ago had disappeared without a trace. He looked around intently but couldn’t find any trace of it. It seemed to have run away while he was checking his Status Window. No wonder it had been tucking its tail and watching him cautiously.</p>  
<p>“Tch.”</p>  
<p>Jin-Woo clicked his tongue in disappointment, feeling as though he’d let experience points slip away.</p>  
<p>As he was about to move on...</p>  
<p>‘Do these guys not drop Magic Stones or something?’</p>  
<p>He suddenly stopped in his tracks, struck by the thought. Magic Beasts that came out of Gates usually had one or more Magic Stones inside them. If luck was on your side, you might even find a Rune Stone. Rune Stones, which could teach Skills, were valuable, and Magic Stones were also traded at high prices for various uses. It wasn’t an exaggeration to say that Hunters went on Raids not just for the base reward but also to hunt for these Magic Stones.</p>  
<p>Jin-Woo was also a Hunter. It felt disappointing to have successfully hunted something but not have anything to show for it.</p>  
<p>Out of curiosity, he cut open the Lycan’s belly, but it was a wasted effort. These creatures seemed to be entirely different from Magic Beasts. He had been to many Dungeons, but he had never seen a Magic Beast that resembled a wolf so closely.</p>  
<p>As Jin-Woo was about to brush off his hands and stand up...</p>  
<p>“Hmm?”</p>  
<p>He noticed something shining inside the Lycan’s mouth. Jin-Woo pried open the Lycan’s jaws. One of the Lycan’s fangs appeared, gleaming brightly. When he reached out to touch it, a message popped up.</p>  
<p>[Item: Lycan’s Fang Found. Would you like to acquire it?]</p>  
<p>“Acquire.”</p>  
<p>[Item: Lycan’s Fang]   
\*\*Acquisition Difficulty:\*\* None   
\*\*Type:\*\* Miscellaneous   
A large and sharp Lycan’s fang. You can store it in your inventory or sell it at the shop.</p>  
<p>Jin-Woo was baffled as he held the fang in his hand.</p>  
<p>‘There’s a shop too?’</p>  
<p>Where in the world is there such an unfriendly system? Forcing the user to figure everything out through trial and error. Even during the Penalty Quest, there had been no explanation, almost leading him to his death.</p>  
<p>Grinding his teeth, Jin-Woo summoned the shop.</p>  
<p>“Shop.”</p>  
<p>He half-expected a store with a sign saying ‘Shop’ and an NPC merchant standing inside, like in most games. But what appeared in the air was just a hologram-like green text, similar to when he first opened the message window. Only two words this time: ‘Buy’ and ‘Sell.’</p>  
<p>“...”</p>  
<p>It was an extremely simplistic shop. Jin-Woo selected ‘Buy.’ He had no money on him, but he was curious about what items were available for purchase. But the system was cold.</p>  
<p>[You do not meet the Level requirement to use the Buy function.]</p>  
<p>Being treated like a nobody where money was involved was something he was already used to.</p>  
<p>“Yeah, yeah.”</p>  
<p>Casually, he turned his attention to ‘Sell.’</p>  
<p>[Would you like to sell the Item: Lycan’s Fang?]</p>  
<p>“Sure.”</p>  
<p>With a \*clink\*, the inventory window popped up. At the very bottom of the inventory, in the slot labeled ‘Gold,’ the number 20 appeared. It had been empty until just yesterday.</p>  
<p>‘20 Gold.’</p>  
<p>It wasn’t actual cash he could use, and since he couldn’t use the shop yet, he couldn’t quite grasp how much 20 Gold was worth.</p>  
<p>‘Well, what could I expect from creatures in an E-rank Dungeon?’</p>  
<p>Though there’s a difference between Dungeons and Instances, they’re all the same in the end. Still, just in case, Jin-Woo thought of collecting the other Lycan’s fangs before slapping his forehead.</p>  
<p>“I completely blew its head off…”</p>  
<p>With a bitter expression, he turned away. The 20 Gold he didn’t know the value of lingered in his mind, but he couldn’t waste time searching for the Lycan’s fang in this dark basement.</p>  
<p>However, as he turned around, that regret melted away like snow.</p>  
<p>“Grrrrr.”</p>  
<p>“Grrrr.”</p>  
<p>“Grrrrrr!”</p>  
<p>“Grk!”</p>  
<p>The Lycan he thought had run away had returned, bringing along a horde of its companions! A smile bloomed on Jin-Woo’s face. There were at least 20 of them.</p>  
<p>“Eureka!”</p>  
<p>Wait, was that the right word? Well, it clearly expressed his joy, so it didn’t matter.</p>  
<p>Jin-Woo tightly gripped the hilt of his sword.</p>  
<p>“I’ll chew them all up except for their fangs.”</p>  
<p>The Lycans flinched, terrified by the murderous glint in the eyes of a man who couldn’t resist the allure of money. In that moment, Jin-Woo leaped toward them.</p>  
<p>\*\*\*</p>  
<p>[Your Level has increased!]</p>  
<p>[Your Level has increased!]</p>  
<p>[Your Level has increased!]</p>  
<p>As expected, his Level soared rapidly. After hunting down every Lycan on the first floor, Jin-Woo quickly reached Level 7. He had jumped five Levels in an instant.</p>  
<p>“Grrk!”</p>  
<p>As he caught the last one trying to flee with its tail between its legs, a strange message appeared.</p>  
<p>\*Ding\*</p>  
<p>[Title: Wolf Slayer Acquired.]</p>  
<p>“A Title?”</p>  
<p>[Title: Wolf Slayer]   
A title given to a hunter skilled in slaying wolves. All Stats increase by 40% when facing Beast-type Monsters.</p>  
<p>Opening his Status Window, he saw that his Title had indeed changed.</p>  
  
<p>\*\*Name:\*\* Sung Jin-Woo   
\*\*Level:\*\* 7   
\*\*Job:\*\* None   
\*\*Title:\*\* Wolf Slayer   
\*\*HP:\*\* 766   
\*\*MP:\*\* 81   
\*\*Fatigue:\*\* 3   
  
\*\*[Stats]\*\*   
\*\*Strength:\*\* 37   
\*\*Stamina:\*\* 16   
\*\*Agility:\*\* 16   
\*\*Intelligence:\*\* 16   
\*\*Senses:\*\* 16   
\*(Distributable Stat Points: 0)\*   
  
\*\*[Skills]\*\*   
\*\*Passive Skill:\*\* (Unknown) Lv.MAX, Endurance Lv.1   
\*\*Active Skill:\*\* Dash Lv.1</p>  
  
<p>A 40% increase in Stats when facing Beast-type Monsters. Although it was limited to certain targets, a 40% Stat boost was quite impressive.</p>  
<p>‘Would it also apply to Beast-type Magic Beasts?’</p>  
<p>If it did, he could easily take down Magic Beasts during Raids. But even without that, the gains were substantial.</p>  
<p>‘34 Wolf Fangs, two Rusty Daggers, one Traveler’s Clothes, and one Return Stone.’</p>  
<p>While hunting the wolves, items occasionally dropped from their bodies. However, none of them were particularly useful. The Rusty Dagger had lower attack power than his current Steel Sword, and the Traveler’s Clothes wasn’t an equippable item but rather junk meant to be sold at the shop. After selling everything, he earned over 1,000 Gold.</p>  
<p>[Current Balance: 1,060 Gold]</p>  
<p>‘...But I can’t feel happy about it.’</p>  
<p>No matter how much he saved, there was no immediate use for it. Aside from the Gold, all he had left was the Return Stone. Earlier, when he was struggling to escape the Dungeon entrance, he was told that he needed a Return Stone to get out. Now, if he wanted, he could return to the outside world.</p>  
<p>A crossroads lay ahead. In front of him was a staircase leading down to the second basement level. And in his hand was the Return Stone.</p>  
<p>‘Advance or retreat…’</p>  
<p>In the past, he would have chosen retreat without hesitation. It was why he had survived numerous Raids relatively unscathed despite his subpar Stats. Others called it a miracle, but it was the result of his clever maneuvering. But now, things were different. He didn’t want to turn back. If he withdrew here, he felt as though he would never move forward again.</p>  
<p>“I’ve retreated enough times to get sick of it.”</p>  
<p>It wouldn’t hurt to charge ahead for once. Jin-Woo slipped the Return Stone back into his pocket. His steps toward the second basement level were light.</p>  
  
\*\*CHAPTER END\*\*