\*\*CHAPTER START\*\*  
  
<h1>Solo Leveling - Chapter 19</h1>  
  
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<p>Chapter 19.</p>  
  
<p>Even as the insects ferociously bit and tore at him, Hwang Dong-Seok remained completely composed, waiting for the right moment to counterattack.</p>  
  
<p>The moment when the Dealers’ concentrated attacks would finally break through.</p>  
  
<p>‘This should be enough!’</p>  
  
<p>Now begins the real hunt.</p>  
  
<p>The reason Hunters are called Hunters!</p>  
  
<p>Hwang Dong-Seok shouted.</p>  
  
<p>“Attack!”</p>  
  
<p>With a short, gruff command, the full firepower of the team poured onto the insects.</p>  
  
<p>\*Kiiieeeek-\*</p>  
  
<p>\*Kieeek-\*</p>  
  
<p>From all around, the agonized cries of the Magic Beasts erupted.</p>  
  
<p>Jin-Woo stood at the back, watching the team’s battle unfold.</p>  
  
<p>That was the condition of the contract for this Raid.</p>  
  
<p>As he watched their fight, he imagined how he would have fought in their place.</p>  
  
<p>‘Frustrating.’</p>  
  
<p>Jin-Woo suppressed the urge to jump in several times.</p>  
  
<p>He could see so many openings in the Magic Beasts’ defenses.</p>  
  
<p>And he also noticed the Hunters frequently missing those openings.</p>  
  
<p>Yet, he had to stand still and just watch, which was beyond frustrating.</p>  
  
<p>However, Hwang Dong-Seok’s team suffered fewer casualties than expected.</p>  
  
<p>It was because the team members worked well together.</p>  
  
<p>The confidence Hwang Dong-Seok had shown before the Raid didn’t seem entirely unfounded.</p>  
  
<p>“Jin-Seok, 11 o’clock!”</p>  
  
<p>“Bro, they’re coming from the right too!”</p>  
  
<p>“Jun-Tae, Seok-Min, Kyu-Hwan! You guys take the right.”</p>  
  
<p>“Yes!”</p>  
  
<p>“Cheol-Jin, your wrist is hurt. Fall back for now.”</p>  
  
<p>“Hwang hyung, I’m fine.”</p>  
  
<p>“Should we just clear the entrance and head back? We don’t know how long this will take, so don’t push too hard from the start. Pace yourselves.”</p>  
  
<p>“Got it.”</p>  
  
<p>Their communication was smooth, likely because they had been working together for a long time.</p>  
  
<p>Good communication leads to good teamwork.</p>  
  
<p>They were different from the Hunters of the Ragtag Team.</p>  
  
<p>‘Surprisingly, they’re not bad.’</p>  
  
<p>Jin-Woo’s gaze shifted to Yoo Jin-Ho.</p>  
  
<p>When a Magic Beast bit down on his shield with its jaw, Jin-Ho kicked it away and swung his sword.</p>  
  
<p>The expensive sword cleanly sliced through the Magic Beast’s head.</p>  
  
<p>For a rookie D-rank Hunter, he was holding his own.</p>  
  
<p>‘His lack of skill and experience is being covered by his gear.’</p>  
  
<p>It wasn’t for nothing that Hunters struggled to get good equipment.</p>  
  
<p>Yoo Jin-Ho, who had locked eyes with Jin-Woo, gave a thumbs-up.</p>  
  
<p>“...”</p>  
  
<p>His expression was so earnest that Jin-Woo had no choice but to return the gesture with a thumbs-up of his own.</p>  
  
<p>Yoo Jin-Ho turned away, seemingly satisfied.</p>  
  
<p>\*Kiiieeek-\*</p>  
  
<p>In any case, the intense battle was gradually coming to an end.</p>  
  
<p>Once the area was mostly cleared, Hwang Dong-Seok gave instructions to his team.</p>  
  
<p>“Collect all the Magic Crystals! Divide them exactly into nine parts.”</p>  
  
<p>“Yes.”</p>  
  
<p>“This is my favorite part.”</p>  
  
<p>“Mine too.”</p>  
  
<p>Watching his team members cheerfully gather the loot, Hwang Dong-Seok approached Jin-Woo.</p>  
  
<p>“Ah, we owe you our lives.”</p>  
  
<p>“Huh?”</p>  
  
<p>“It was you, Sung Jin-Woo, who warned us about the Magic Beasts coming from above earlier. How did you know?”</p>  
  
<p>“Instinct... I guess.”</p>  
  
<p>Jin-Woo brushed it off vaguely.</p>  
  
<p>He couldn’t say it was because his Senses Stat was high.</p>  
  
<p>“Ah, really? Instinct... We were really lucky. If we hadn’t noticed that, who knows what would’ve happened, phew-.”</p>  
  
<p>Hwang Dong-Seok said this while wiping his brow.</p>  
  
<p>But then.</p>  
  
<p>One of the Hunters, who had been searching through the insects, gestured to Hwang Dong-Seok.</p>  
  
<p>“Hwang hyung, come here for a second.”</p>  
  
<p>The team members had gathered in one spot.</p>  
  
<p>Hwang Dong-Seok headed over.</p>  
  
<p>“Huh?”</p>  
  
<p>“These guys are a bit weird.”</p>  
  
<p>When Hwang Dong-Seok arrived, the Hunters made way for him.</p>  
  
<p>Hwang Dong-Seok crouched down and looked around.</p>  
  
<p>Nothing particularly strange stood out.</p>  
  
<p>All he could see were dead insects.</p>  
  
<p>“What’s so weird about them?”</p>  
  
<p>Hwang Dong-Seok tilted his head in confusion.</p>  
  
<p>One of the team members pointed to the leg of a nearby insect.</p>  
  
<p>“That wound wasn’t caused by us, right?”</p>  
  
<p>“...”</p>  
  
<p>A frown formed on Hwang Dong-Seok’s forehead.</p>  
  
<p>After carefully examining it, he spoke.</p>  
  
<p>“It looks like... something bit it?”</p>  
  
<p>“Right? There are a lot of them with similar wounds. Look here, and here too. That one’s even missing a wing. These guys were already beaten up before we fought them, weren’t they?”</p>  
  
<p>Hwang Dong-Seok’s face hardened.</p>  
  
<p>No wonder the battle felt easier despite the large number of Magic Beasts.</p>  
  
<p>“Could it be that these guys... were already fighting something else?”</p>  
  
<p>At that moment.</p>  
  
<p>For a brief second, Jin-Woo felt Hwang Dong-Seok and a few other members’ gazes shift toward him.</p>  
  
<p>When Jin-Woo noticed, they quickly looked away.</p>  
  
<p>Seeing this, Jin-Woo was certain.</p>  
  
<p>‘As I thought...’</p>  
  
<p>His initial guess was correct.</p>  
  
<p>The fact that they worked so well together meant they had been coordinating for a long time.</p>  
  
<p>And without any casualties.</p>  
  
<p>But was that possible without a Healer?</p>  
  
<p>No matter how skilled the Hunters were, mistakes were inevitable. Just moments ago, their formation had nearly been broken by the insects’ attacks.</p>  
  
<p>A rough picture began to form in his mind.</p>  
  
<p>A smile appeared on Jin-Woo’s lips.</p>  
  
<p>‘Maybe... I can use this to my advantage.’</p>  
  
<p>If things went as he expected, that is.</p>  
  
<p>Hwang Dong-Seok stood up with a smile.</p>  
  
<p>“Alright, let’s head further in. If this keeps up, we’ll clear this in no time.”</p>  
  
<p>Hwang Dong-Seok spoke loudly on purpose.</p>  
  
<p>It wasn’t just for his team members to hear.</p>  
  
<p>The existing team members were all gathered around Hwang Dong-Seok.</p>  
  
<p>Meanwhile, Yoo Jin-Ho approached with a bright smile.</p>  
  
<p>“Hyung, did you see that? You saw it, right? I totally wrecked those Magic Beasts.”</p>  
  
<p>Yoo Jin-Ho swung his sword through the air with enthusiasm.</p>  
  
<p>Jin-Woo asked.</p>  
  
<p>“That sword and shield of yours, they’re expensive, right?”</p>  
  
<p>“Huh? Ah, yeah. My dad made sure to get me the best for my first Raid.”</p>  
  
<p>“Then you should be careful.”</p>  
  
<p>Jin-Woo patted Yoo Jin-Ho on the shoulder a few times.</p>  
  
<p>Then he followed the Hunters who had started moving further in.</p>  
  
<p>“What’s that supposed to mean?”</p>  
  
<p>Yoo Jin-Ho tilted his head in confusion but soon followed the group.</p>  
  
<p>The cave stretched on for a while.</p>  
  
<p>But along the way, not a single Magic Beast was seen.</p>  
  
<p>It was a linear Dungeon, so it wasn’t like they could have missed them.</p>  
  
<p>“Were the ones at the entrance all there were?”</p>  
  
<p>“Nah, no way.”</p>  
  
<p>“This is really strange.”</p>  
  
<p>“But there’s still a Boss, right?”</p>  
  
<p>“There’s no way the Gate would be open without a Boss.”</p>  
  
<p>The Hunters were divided in their opinions about the empty interior of the large Dungeon.</p>  
  
<p>“Wait.”</p>  
  
<p>Hwang Dong-Seok stopped.</p>  
  
<p>The sudden halt caused a minor collision.</p>  
  
<p>A Hunter who had bumped his nose into the back of the person in front of him grimaced and asked.</p>  
  
<p>“Ugh— Hwang hyung, what is it?”</p>  
  
<p>“Kyu-Hwan, shine the light here.”</p>  
  
<p>Jo Kyu-Hwan moved the orb of light he had been holding in front of him, illuminating the corner Hwang Dong-Seok was pointing at.</p>  
  
<p>“Holy...”</p>  
  
<p>“Is this all?”</p>  
  
<p>The Hunters groaned softly.</p>  
  
<p>Wings, legs, bodies, and even heads of the insects.</p>  
  
<p>The remains of dead insects were scattered everywhere.</p>  
  
<p>The further they went into the cave, the more remains there were.</p>  
  
<p>At the end of it all was a large room.</p>  
  
<p>“The Boss Room.”</p>  
  
<p>Someone muttered.</p>  
  
<p>Hwang Dong-Seok nodded.</p>  
  
<p>“Everyone, get your gear ready.”</p>  
  
<p>The Hunters immediately armed themselves.</p>  
  
<p>Tension hung in the air.</p>  
  
<p>Step by step.</p>  
  
<p>Led by their leader, Hwang Dong-Seok, the Hunters cautiously entered the Boss Room.</p>  
  
<p>But the silence didn’t last long.</p>  
  
<p>“Wow, this is amazing!”</p>  
  
<p>A Hunter with a red nose shouted.</p>  
  
<p>It was the same guy who had bumped his nose earlier.</p>  
  
<p>Making loud noises in a Dungeon was usually a big no-no.</p>  
  
<p>Magic Beasts could hear the noise and come running, even if they hadn’t been encountered yet.</p>  
  
<p>But no one seemed to care about scolding the red-nosed Hunter.</p>  
  
<p>“Whoa-.”</p>  
  
<p>“How much is all this worth?”</p>  
  
<p>“This is insane!”</p>  
  
<p>Everyone was too busy marveling.</p>  
  
<p>“Hold it.”</p>  
  
<p>Jo Kyu-Hwan fixed the orb of light high in the air, revealing the full extent of the room.</p>  
  
<p>Gem-like stones protruding from the cave walls.</p>  
  
<p>“Mana Stones!”</p>  
  
<p>“An entire wall of Mana Stones!”</p>  
  
<p>The Hunters’ eyes sparkled even more than the Mana Stones reflecting the light.</p>  
  
<p>Mana Stones!</p>  
  
<p>One of the treasures that could be found in Dungeons.</p>  
  
<p>They contained less mana than Magic Crystals found in Magic Beasts, but they were usually found in large quantities, making them a lucrative find.</p>  
  
<p>Especially the Mana Stones they had discovered this time—the amount was no joke.</p>  
  
<p>They filled an entire wall of the large cave.</p>  
  
<p>“Roughly estimating...”</p>  
  
<p>One of the Hunters who was good with calculations moved his fingers busily.</p>  
  
<p>“If we mine all of this, it’ll be worth over a billion won. Even divided into nine parts, each person would get over 100 million.”</p>  
  
<p>Whoa-</p>  
  
<p>Smiles spread across the Hunters’ faces.</p>  
  
<p>Yoo Jin-Ho, who had been lagging behind, nudged Jin-Woo’s side with his elbow.</p>  
  
<p>“Hyung, give me the contract!”</p>  
  
<p>“Why do you need the contract?”</p>  
  
<p>“Just trust me. I’m pretty sharp when it comes to legal stuff.”</p>  
  
<p>Jin-Woo shrugged and handed over the contract as requested.</p>  
  
<p>Yoo Jin-Ho took it and approached Hwang Dong-Seok.</p>  
  
<p>“Excuse me, seniors, can I have a word?”</p>  
  
<p>The Hunters’ attention instantly shifted to Yoo Jin-Ho.</p>  
  
<p>Yoo Jin-Ho unfolded Jin-Woo’s contract and showed it to them.</p>  
  
<p>“Leader, this is Jin-Woo hyung’s contract. As you can see, it only mentions the distribution of Magic Crystals obtained from hunting. There’s no mention of other treasures.”</p>  
  
<p>Everyone understood what Yoo Jin-Ho was getting at.</p>  
  
<p>-It was customary to divide treasures or rare items found in Dungeons equally among all members. This was different from hunting, where only the Magic Crystals from the beasts one personally killed were kept.</p>  
  
<p>In other words, the Mana Stones should be divided into ten parts, not nine.</p>  
  
<p>The Hunters’ expressions changed in an instant, but Hwang Dong-Seok stepped forward with a smile.</p>  
  
<p>“Of course, we’ll divide it fairly. We know the rules. But first, there’s something we need to take care of.”</p>  
  
<p>Hwang Dong-Seok pointed forward with his index finger.</p>  
  
<p>Yoo Jin-Ho flinched.</p>  
  
<p>He thought Hwang Dong-Seok was pointing at him.</p>  
  
<p>But when he turned around, he saw a spider the size of a house crouching silently in the far corner.</p>  
  
<p>“Gasp...!”</p>  
  
<p>Yoo Jin-Ho stumbled back, covering his mouth at the sight of the spider’s imposing figure.</p>  
  
<p>The spider didn’t move, as if it were asleep.</p>  
  
<p>Around it, the shells of insects were piled up like a mountain.</p>  
  
<p>Some were half-eaten, and the mixture of saliva made it look like a toppled garbage bin.</p>  
  
<p>“That’s the Boss.”</p>  
  
<p>“Did that thing eat all the insects in the Dungeon?”</p>  
  
<p>“It sure ate a lot.”</p>  
  
<p>The Hunters made comments as they observed the spider.</p>  
  
<p>Hwang Dong-Seok gathered the Hunters.</p>  
  
<p>Jin-Woo and Yoo Jin-Ho also stood in front of Hwang Dong-Seok.</p>  
  
<p>“As you all know, once we defeat the Boss, the Gate will close. So before we take on the spider, let’s mine the Mana Stones and move them out first.”</p>  
  
<p>Everyone nodded.</p>  
  
<p>Hwang Dong-Seok’s gaze shifted to the bald-headed Hunter.</p>  
  
<p>“Cheol-Jin, did you bring the equipment?”</p>  
  
<p>Lee Cheol-Jin shook his head.</p>  
  
<p>“No. Who would’ve thought we’d find Mana Stones in a C-rank Dungeon? I left all the mining equipment in the car.”</p>  
  
<p>“In-Seok... Didn’t I tell you to always be prepared?”</p>  
  
<p>“Sorry, sorry. Really sorry about this.”</p>  
  
<p>Lee Cheol-Jin smiled sheepishly and bowed apologetically to Hwang Dong-Seok, the team members, and even Jin-Woo.</p>  
  
<p>Hwang Dong-Seok scratched his head and said.</p>  
  
<p>“Ugh, this is going to be a hassle. Then you two stay here and keep watch. We’ll go get the equipment.”</p>  
  
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\*\*CHAPTER END\*\*