\*\*CHAPTER START\*\*  
  
<h1>Solo Leveling - Chapter 8</h1>  
  
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<p>Chapter 8</p>  
  
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<p>Startled by the deep voice coming from the corner, Jin-Woo turned his head sharply to look.</p>  
  
<p>“I apologize if I startled you.”</p>  
  
<p>“We couldn’t delay any longer.”</p>  
  
<p>Two men in black suits approached the bed.</p>  
  
<p>Jin-Woo tilted his head and asked,</p>  
  
<p>“Who... are you?”</p>  
  
<p>Their faces were completely unfamiliar to him.</p>  
  
<p>The man with short, military-style hair handed him a business card.</p>  
  
<p>“We work in this field.”</p>  
  
<p>Jin-Woo took the card and looked at it.</p>  
  
<p>‘Woo Jin-Chul, Section Chief of the Surveillance Division, Korean Hunters Association?’</p>  
  
<p>The Surveillance Division was the only department within the Hunters Association that held a significant number of powerful Hunters.</p>  
  
<p>As an organization responsible for overseeing Hunters, it was only natural that they had high-level Hunters.</p>  
  
<p>“Why is the Surveillance Division looking for me?”</p>  
  
<p>Woo Jin-Chul pulled a chair closer and sat down.</p>  
  
<p>A man who appeared to be his subordinate stood behind him.</p>  
  
<p>The presence of two well-built men sitting so close was overwhelming.</p>  
  
<p>The story they shared was shocking.</p>  
  
<p>“I was unconscious for three days?”</p>  
  
<p>“Do you remember what happened before you lost consciousness?”</p>  
  
<p>“Yes.”</p>  
  
<p>“Please tell us everything you remember.”</p>  
  
<p>Jin-Woo recounted everything truthfully, except for the strange auditory hallucination he had heard before losing consciousness.</p>  
  
<p>“And then I lost consciousness... Is that it?”</p>  
  
<p>“Yes, when I woke up, I was here.”</p>  
  
<p>Woo Jin-Chul and his subordinate exchanged glances.</p>  
  
<p>It seemed they were at a loss since Jin-Woo himself didn’t know what had happened.</p>  
  
<p>In truth, Jin-Woo was the one who wanted to know the most.</p>  
  
<p>“How did I end up here? Did a large guild take care of them?”</p>  
  
<p>“Well, actually...”</p>  
  
<p>Woo Jin-Chul hesitated before speaking.</p>  
  
<p>“When the ‘White Tiger’ guild arrived at the scene after receiving reports from survivors, it was already...”</p>  
  
<p>The White Tiger guild was one of the top five largest guilds in South Korea.</p>  
  
<p>Involving the White Tiger guild meant the Association had recognized the danger.</p>  
  
<p>What exactly had happened there?</p>  
  
<p>Jin-Woo swallowed dryly.</p>  
  
<p>“Already...?”</p>  
  
<p>“Everything was gone. In that room, only Hunter Sung Jin-Woo was found unconscious. There were no traces of the statues or any other remains.”</p>  
  
<p>“What?”</p>  
  
<p>Jin-Woo looked incredulous.</p>  
  
<p>“We can’t believe it either. If there had been any inconsistencies in the survivors’ statements or if parts of the victims’ bodies had been left at the scene, we might have considered other possibilities.”</p>  
  
<p>Woo Jin-Chul scratched his chin.</p>  
  
<p>He had been working in the Surveillance Division for six years as an A-rank.</p>  
  
<p>He prided himself on having experienced everything.</p>  
  
<p>Yet, this was the first time he had encountered such a case.</p>  
  
<p>They had even consulted other guilds and foreign organizations, but to no avail.</p>  
  
<p>So...</p>  
  
<p>“Our theory is...”</p>  
  
<p>Woo Jin-Chul spoke cautiously.</p>  
  
<p>“There must have been something incredibly powerful there. And those things were dealt with by someone, or something. No otherworldly beings escaped from the gate before it closed.”</p>  
  
<p>They had to consider every possibility, no matter how slim.</p>  
  
<p>The Association had pondered deeply, and this was the conclusion they reached.</p>  
  
<p>Woo Jin-Chul watched Jin-Woo’s reaction as he continued.</p>  
  
<p>“We suspect... that Hunter Sung Jin-Woo may have undergone a second awakening.”</p>  
  
<p>A second awakening!</p>  
  
<p>Jin-Woo’s eyes widened.</p>  
  
<p>It was extremely rare, but there were cases where a Hunter who had already awakened underwent a second awakening.</p>  
  
<p>Often referred to as a ‘re-awakening,’ this process usually resulted in the Hunter becoming significantly stronger than before.</p>  
  
<p>Once a Hunter’s rank was determined, it rarely changed.</p>  
  
<p>A Hunter’s abilities were set when they first awakened.</p>  
  
<p>But re-awakened Hunters were different.</p>  
  
<p>They could surpass their limits, with C-rank Hunters becoming A-rank, or B-rank Hunters reaching S-rank.</p>  
  
<p>Woo Jin-Chul swallowed hard.</p>  
  
<p>‘If Sung Jin-Woo... became an S-rank, or even higher, through a re-awakening, it wouldn’t be impossible for him to have dealt with those monsters alone.’</p>  
  
<p>Especially since the giant statue had melted C-rank Hunters with just a glance.</p>  
  
<p>What kind of power would someone need to kill such a monster while unconscious?</p>  
  
<p>To prepare for any possibility, they had classified this incident as top secret and strictly controlled all information.</p>  
  
<p>That was why they had provided Jin-Woo with a private hospital room and the best medical care.</p>  
  
<p>Woo Jin-Chul’s heart raced.</p>  
  
<p>‘Perhaps South Korea could have a Hunter of national power level...’</p>  
  
<p>There were fewer than ten Hunters in the world who were considered national power level.</p>  
  
<p>If South Korea could have one, it would be a game-changer!</p>  
  
<p>Fortunately, confirming a re-awakening wasn’t difficult.</p>  
  
<p>Strike while the iron is hot, as they say.</p>  
  
<p>Woo Jin-Chul instructed his subordinate.</p>  
  
<p>“Bring it.”</p>  
  
<p>The subordinate rummaged through a bag in the corner and pulled something out.</p>  
  
<p>“That’s...”</p>  
  
<p>Before Jin-Woo could ask, Woo Jin-Chul explained.</p>  
  
<p>“It’s a mana measuring device.”</p>  
  
<p>He added that while this device was compact, its performance was no less than the official mana measuring devices at the Association.</p>  
  
<p>“Just place your hand on this mana stone for a moment.”</p>  
  
<p>On the device was a mana stone the size of a fist.</p>  
  
<p>A black mana stone, as if it could suck you in like a black hole!</p>  
  
<p>It was a top-tier mana stone, only obtainable from A-rank or higher magical beasts, each worth billions.</p>  
  
<p>As Jin-Woo silently stared at the mana stone, Woo Jin-Chul spoke with a serious expression.</p>  
  
<p>“This is a necessary procedure for the investigation. Please cooperate.”</p>  
  
<p>Jin-Woo nodded.</p>  
  
<p>If this was the re-awakening he had dreamed of, his life would change completely.</p>  
  
<p>Why would he refuse when they were offering to check for free?</p>  
  
<p>Jin-Woo placed his hand on the mana stone, and soon a faint light began to emanate from it.</p>  
  
<p>Cold sweat formed on the foreheads of Woo Jin-Chul and his subordinate.</p>  
  
<p>\*Whoosh—\*</p>  
  
<p>The light surrounding the mana stone disappeared.</p>  
  
<p>Woo Jin-Chul quickly removed his sunglasses and checked the readings.</p>  
  
<p>His pupils trembled as if an earthquake had struck.</p>  
  
<p>“This can’t be!”</p>  
  
<p>No matter how many times he looked, the numbers didn’t change.</p>  
  
<p>‘How...’</p>  
  
<p>How could someone holding a Hunter license have a mana level of only 10?</p>  
  
<p>Considering that the average mana level of the lowest rank, E-rank Hunters, was between 70 and 100, Sung Jin-Woo was almost no different from an ordinary person.</p>  
  
<p>“Is it a re-awakening? If so, what rank would it be?”</p>  
  
<p>Jin-Woo clenched his sweaty hands.</p>  
  
<p>The reactions of the two Surveillance Division employees suggested that the results were anything but normal.</p>  
  
<p>Woo Jin-Chul compared Jin-Woo’s previous data with the current readings and nodded.</p>  
  
<p>‘The first measurement was 12. Four years later, it’s 10. Although it decreased by 2, it’s within the margin of error.’</p>  
  
<p>There was nothing wrong with the mana measuring device.</p>  
  
<p>Sung Jin-Woo’s mana level was simply incomprehensibly low.</p>  
  
<p>It was a miracle he had survived this long.</p>  
  
<p>Deciding that further investigation was a waste of time, Woo Jin-Chul stood up.</p>  
  
<p>“Let’s go.”</p>  
  
<p>“Yes.”</p>  
  
<p>Woo Jin-Chul and his subordinate quickly gathered their things.</p>  
  
<p>“Wait, could you at least tell me what’s going on...?”</p>  
  
<p>As Jin-Woo asked, Woo Jin-Chul bowed his head.</p>  
  
<p>“Thank you for your cooperation. Please contact us if you remember anything else.”</p>  
  
<p>The two men left the room as quickly as they had entered.</p>  
  
<p>The once crowded room now felt empty.</p>  
  
<p>“...”</p>  
  
<p>Jin-Woo scratched the back of his neck.</p>  
  
<p>‘Was it all just a false hope?’</p>  
  
<p>Aside from feeling physically refreshed, nothing had really changed.</p>  
  
<p>And even if he had undergone a re-awakening, it would have been impossible for him to take on all those monsters alone.</p>  
  
<p>‘Would someone like the ‘Final Weapon’ or the S-rank above S-rank, Go Gun-Hee, be able to handle them?’</p>  
  
<p>Since he had never actually seen them fight, it was a meaningless assumption.</p>  
  
<p>Information about S-rank Hunters was shrouded in mystery.</p>  
  
<p>They were like clouds in the sky—untouchable.</p>  
  
<p>As he thought this, he suddenly looked up.</p>  
  
<p>‘Huh?’</p>  
  
<p>When he glanced upward, he saw words floating in the air.</p>  
  
<p>[You have unread messages.]</p>  
  
<p>\*\*\*</p>  
  
<p>‘...?’</p>  
  
<p>He blinked and looked again.</p>  
  
<p>[You have unread messages.]</p>  
  
<p>The words remained unchanged.</p>  
  
<p>He shook his head vigorously and rubbed his eyes, but nothing changed.</p>  
  
<p>Jin-Woo held his throbbing forehead with one hand and let his head drop.</p>  
  
<p>‘It was only a short while ago that I heard those auditory hallucinations, and now I’m seeing things...’</p>  
  
<p>Had something really happened to his head?</p>  
  
<p>There was something called Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder [PTSD].</p>  
  
<p>It referred to the abnormal symptoms displayed by those who had experienced major accidents or traumatic events.</p>  
  
<p>Having recently lost most of his comrades and nearly died himself, it wouldn’t be strange for him to hear voices or see things.</p>  
  
<p>‘But...’</p>  
  
<p>There were a few things that didn’t quite add up.</p>  
  
<p>Jin-Woo’s gaze shifted to his leg.</p>  
  
<p>The leg that had been severed by the statue’s shield was now perfectly intact.</p>  
  
<p>The double dungeon, the underground shrine, the sudden voice, the fully healed leg, and now the message before his eyes.</p>  
  
<p>Too many things had happened at once.</p>  
  
<p>‘Perhaps...’</p>  
  
<p>These events weren’t separate incidents but might be connected in some way.</p>  
  
<p>As this thought crossed his mind, the throbbing in his head seemed to ease slightly.</p>  
  
<p>‘Alright.’</p>  
  
<p>Jin-Woo lifted his head.</p>  
  
<p>As his agitation subsided and his mind calmed, he suddenly became curious about the message’s contents.</p>  
  
<p>There might be clues within the message that could help solve some of his questions.</p>  
  
<p>Jin-Woo reached out toward the floating words to check the message.</p>  
  
<p>His hand passed right through the letters.</p>  
  
<p>‘Not touch-based?’</p>  
  
<p>He had become too accustomed to smartphones.</p>  
  
<p>No other method came to mind.</p>  
  
<p>As he pondered how to check the message, a memory from before he lost consciousness surfaced.</p>  
  
<p>“That’s right.”</p>  
  
<p>At that time, all communication with the mysterious voice had been through dialogue.</p>  
  
<p>‘Maybe I can think the words in my head or say them out loud, like back then?’</p>  
  
<p>Having reached this conclusion, Jin-Woo began reciting plausible commands one after another.</p>  
  
<p>“Check.”</p>  
  
<p>“Message.”</p>  
  
<p>“Check message.”</p>  
  
<p>“Message check.”</p>  
  
<p>“View.”</p>  
  
<p>“Show me.”</p>  
  
<p>“Let’s see.”</p>  
  
<p>“Show it to me!”</p>  
  
<p>It was then.</p>  
  
<p>“...What exactly are you so desperate to see?”</p>  
  
<p>Feeling a sharp gaze, Jin-Woo turned his head to see his younger sister in her school uniform peeking through the slightly open hospital room door, staring at him.</p>  
  
<p>“Uh...”</p>  
  
<p>Jin-Woo was at a loss for words.</p>  
  
<p>An older brother staring at the ceiling, begging someone to show him something.</p>  
  
<p>There was no way to explain this.</p>  
  
\*\*CHAPTER END\*\*