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\*\*CHAPTER START\*\*  
  
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### Solo Leveling - Chapter 17  
  
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<p>Chapter 17.</p>  
  
<p>Jin-Ah shook her head, but Jin-Woo suddenly handed her an umbrella.</p>  
  
<p>“Why the umbrella?”</p>  
  
<p>Jin-Ah took the umbrella and looked up. It was still dawn, so it was dark, but the sky seemed clear enough.</p>  
  
<p>“It doesn’t look like it’s going to rain?”</p>  
  
<p>“Take it.”</p>  
  
<p>“It’s heavy.”</p>  
  
<p>“Just take it. It’s a folding umbrella, so it’s not even that heavy. Stop exaggerating.”</p>  
  
<p>\*Bang.\*</p>  
  
<p>Jin-Woo closed the door.</p>  
  
<p>“Ugh, he’s so stubborn.”</p>  
  
<p>As a sign of her displeasure, Jin-Ah lightly kicked the door a few times, then placed the umbrella in the empty space of her bag and turned to leave.</p>  
  
<p>'Wait a minute...'</p>  
  
<p>She calculated the height difference between her brother and herself just now. Strange. Jin-Woo’s gaze was definitely higher than before.</p>  
  
<p>“Do men keep growing even after they’re twenty?”</p>  
  
<p>Nah, that can’t be.</p>  
  
<p>Jin-Ah shook her head again and hurried her steps toward school.</p>  
  
<p>\*Click.\*</p>  
  
<p>Jin-Woo locked the door and called up his Inventory as he entered the house.</p>  
  
<p>“Warehouse.”</p>  
  
<p>Warehouse, Inv, Inventory.</p>  
  
<p>After some trial and error, he realized that as long as the intent was clear, the command phrase didn’t matter. It was the same when opening the Message Window. Whether he said “Open,” “Access,” or “Open up,” as long as the command implied opening, it worked without fail.</p>  
  
<p>Jin-Woo pushed the umbrella he had just obtained from the Random Box into the digital warehouse that appeared before his eyes.</p>  
  
<p>“Another miss today.”</p>  
  
<p>Four days had passed since he entered the Instant Dungeon. Each time he opened a Random Box, he hoped for another Instant Dungeon Entry Key, but it seemed that such an item wasn’t easy to come by. Unfortunately, he still hadn’t gotten one.</p>  
  
<p>'It’s disappointing, but that’s how it is.'</p>  
  
<p>Jin-Woo entered his room and sat down on the bed. Today, he had a decision to make.</p>  
  
<p>“Stats.”</p>  
  
<p>[Stats]   
Strength: 48   
Stamina: 27   
Agility: 27   
Intelligence: 27   
Senses: 27   
(Available Stat Points: 12)</p>  
  
<p>Four days’ worth of stat points had piled up. He had completed his Daily Quests without fail, of course, and claimed every reward. However, he still hadn’t distributed the stat points.</p>  
  
<p>The problem was...</p>  
  
<p>“...It’s hard.”</p>  
  
<p>Yes. It was too difficult to make a decision.</p>  
  
<p>Strength. A good stat. So good that he had never regretted investing in it early on. Agility. Also a good stat. It wasn’t as crucial when dealing with weaker enemies, but as the level of opponents increased, it would become more necessary. Speed is relative, after all. Then there was Stamina and Senses. Stamina was always better the higher it was, and Senses had proven to be far more useful than he initially expected.</p>  
  
<p>Intelligence... Now, that was the problem. It was the only stat whose function he didn’t understand. Even though he had leveled up quite a bit, he didn’t feel like his intelligence had improved. His memory wasn’t better, and his calculations weren’t faster.</p>  
  
<p>'It’s probably related to magic or something...'</p>  
  
<p>Maybe it was a stat he didn’t need right now. So, that left Strength, Agility, Stamina, and Senses.</p>  
  
<p>“...But it’s still hard.”</p>  
  
<p>Even though his options had narrowed, it was still difficult to decide. He wasn’t sure.</p>  
  
<p>He knew that Strength and Agility synergized well. No matter how strong your attack power is, it’s useless if you can’t land a hit. Conversely, no matter how accurate you are, it’s useless if your attacks don’t deal damage. So, Strength and Agility were a package deal.</p>  
  
<p>'My Strength is already high, so it’s best to raise my Agility to match it.'</p>  
  
<p>If he raised Agility, Stamina would have to take a back seat. Agility and Stamina didn’t synergize well. The higher your Agility, the less likely you are to take damage, whereas Stamina shines when you do take damage.</p>  
  
<p>'Of course, you still need a minimum amount of Stamina...'</p>  
  
<p>Raising both Agility and Stamina at the same time seemed incredibly inefficient.</p>  
  
<p>After much deliberation, he decided on the priority order. First, Agility. Second, Senses. Third, Stamina. He had already invested enough in Strength, so he would hold off on that. Since Agility was his focus, he prioritized Senses over Stamina.</p>  
  
<p>Having made up his mind, Jin-Woo allocated 2 points to Strength.</p>  
  
<p>\*Ding.\*</p>  
  
<p>[Stats]   
Strength: 50   
Stamina: 27   
Agility: 27   
Intelligence: 27   
Senses: 27   
(Available Stat Points: 10)</p>  
  
<p>He wanted to get his Strength stat to 50 first. That’s just human psychology. Next, he allocated 8 points to Agility.</p>  
  
<p>[Stats]   
Strength: 50   
Stamina: 27   
Agility: 35   
Intelligence: 27   
Senses: 27   
(Available Stat Points: 2)</p>  
  
<p>This was for a similar reason. He wanted the number to end with a 5.</p>  
  
<p>'Numbers just look cleaner when they end in multiples of 5...'</p>  
  
<p>Strength at 50 and Agility at 35. Seeing the numbers align so neatly gave him a sense of satisfaction, even if it was trivial.</p>  
  
<p>'And the last 2 points.'</p>  
  
<p>Jin-Woo invested the remaining 2 points into Senses. With that, all his stat points were allocated.</p>  
  
<p>[Stats]   
Strength: 50   
Stamina: 27   
Agility: 35   
Intelligence: 27   
Senses: 29   
(Available Stat Points: 0)</p>  
  
<p>It was a bit of a pity that he couldn’t get Senses to 30.</p>  
  
<p>'But there are no more points left, so it can’t be helped.'</p>  
  
<p>Other than that, everything was fine. It seemed like Stamina and Intelligence could be handled through stats gained from level-ups.</p>  
  
<p>“Is this enough?”</p>  
  
<p>It’s rare for everything to turn out exactly how you want it. Still, he was mostly satisfied with the decisions he’d made after careful consideration.</p>  
  
<p>At that moment, the doorbell rang.</p>  
  
<p>\*Bzzz, bzzz-\*</p>  
  
<p>'Is it a call from the Association?'</p>  
  
<p>In the past, Jin-Woo would’ve hesitated to go on raids, but now he was itching to test his improved stats on Magic Beasts. He quickly picked up the phone.</p>  
  
<p>“Hunter Sung Jin-Woo speaking.”</p>  
  
<p>“Oh, you finally answered.”</p>  
  
<p>It wasn’t a call from the Association. He felt a strange sense of disappointment.</p>  
  
<p>“Jin-Woo, why is it so hard to get a hold of you lately?”</p>  
  
<p>The voice on the other end was familiar. It had been four years since Jin-Woo graduated high school and stopped being a student, but the landlord, who had known him since he was a kid, still insisted on calling him “student.”</p>  
  
<p>“I’m sorry, sir. I was in the hospital after an accident.”</p>  
  
<p>“Tsk, tsk. That explains it. Anyway, Jin-Woo... This month’s rent hasn’t come in yet, so I was wondering, if it’s tough right now, I can give you a month or two to catch up.”</p>  
  
<p>“No, I’ll send it over later today.”</p>  
  
<p>“Alright. Don’t overdo it. I know you’re taking care of your mom and sister, but don’t push yourself too hard. Money is important, but your health comes first.”</p>  
  
<p>“Thank you, sir.”</p>  
  
<p>The call ended there.</p>  
  
<p>Jin-Woo took out his bankbook and checked the balance. He had 800,000 won.</p>  
  
<p>“Sigh.”</p>  
  
<p>He couldn’t help but sigh. After paying the 500,000 won rent, he would have only 300,000 won left for the month’s living expenses. The rent, which was already low at 500,000 won, was only possible because the apartment was old and located on the outskirts of the city, and the landlord had kept the rent unchanged for years out of consideration for Jin-Woo’s family’s difficult situation.</p>  
  
<p>These days, it’s hard to live in an apartment for 500,000 won a month. And living on 300,000 won for a month is even harder.</p>  
  
<p>“First, I need to make money.”</p>  
  
<p>Jin-Woo set his immediate goal. He was no longer the person who trembled at the thought of fighting an E-rank Magic Beast just a few days ago.</p>  
  
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<p>How do Hunters make money? By hunting Magic Beasts, of course. S-rank or A-rank high-ranking Hunters get sponsorships, appear in advertisements, and participate in TV shows, making money comparable to wealthy conglomerates. But they’re the minority. The extreme minority. Most Hunters earn their income through Dungeons. The higher their rank and the more experience they have, the more income they can generate. Of course, the conditions were harsh for Jin-Woo, who was officially an E-rank Hunter with no experience in C-rank or higher Gates.</p>  
  
<p>Jin-Woo’s brow furrowed.</p>  
  
<p>'Even if the conditions are bad, it’d be great if I could at least join a raid party...'</p>  
  
<p>He had checked the Hunter recruitment board and made a few calls, but all of them were dead ends. No one wanted to take in an E-rank Hunter. Most Hunters using the recruitment board were individuals, and since they had to protect their own lives, they were very cautious when forming teams or joining others’ teams. They were all in that awkward position of not being strong enough to join a guild but too high-ranked to work for the Association.</p>  
  
<p>'Even those Hunters earn over a million won a month.'</p>  
  
<p>High risk, high return. When your life is on the line, the amount you can earn is naturally high. It’s no wonder Hunters are objects of envy. For Jin-Woo, it was frustrating.</p>  
  
<p>'Should I just take a re-evaluation and raise my rank?'</p>  
  
<p>Jin-Woo shook his head. No matter how he thought about it, it was a stupid idea. An E-rank Hunter becoming a high-rank Hunter! Whether it was A-rank, B-rank, or even C-rank, it didn’t matter. Re-awakening would definitely become a hot topic. The public loves gossip, and Hunters are good fodder for it. The more people talk, the more eyes are on you. His stats would continue to rise, and it would only be a matter of time before his unique constitution was exposed.</p>  
  
<p>“There’s a Hunter who can increase his stats?”</p>  
  
<p>“He gets stronger over time?”</p>  
  
<p>“Who is that Hunter?”</p>  
  
<p>“How is that possible?”</p>  
  
<p>“How can I become like that?”</p>  
  
<p>Many people would undoubtedly be interested. There had never been a Hunter like this before. And among those interested, there would certainly be those who would try to exploit him or harbor ill will.</p>  
  
<p>'If those people have strong powers...'</p>  
  
<p>Just the thought was terrifying. He wasn’t strong enough yet. He didn’t want to reveal himself until he was confident he could protect himself. A rank re-evaluation was out of the question.</p>  
  
<p>'But I still need to make money.'</p>  
  
<p>However, he couldn’t just take on a regular part-time job. The Association could call him at any time. If he went to a Dungeon, he could earn both money and experience, but he couldn’t waste that opportunity for a few pennies.</p>  
  
<p>As he was pondering what to do, a post on the board caught his eye.</p>  
  
<p>-Looking for anyone, regardless of rank, who can come right now! Urgent!!</p>  
  
<p>Jin-Woo’s eyes lit up. It was a freshly posted message. After quickly checking the details, he saw that it was located not far from his home. Jin-Woo immediately picked up the phone. The other party must have been in a hurry because they answered before the first ring even finished.</p>  
  
<p>“Hello?”</p>  
  
<p>Jin-Woo briefly explained his situation and calmly waited for the other party’s response.</p>  
  
<p>“Ah, you’re E-rank?”</p>  
  
<p>The reaction wasn’t as bad as he expected.</p>  
  
<p>“That’s fine. Just come and fill the headcount. Since it’s a C-rank Gate, it’ll be hard for you to participate in the hunt, so we’ll split the rewards among ourselves and give you 2 million won in cash instead. How about it? Can you come right now?”</p>  
  
<p>2 million won just for filling the headcount! It was a pretty good deal for the role. It was a decent offer. It was a shame that he wouldn’t get a share of the Dungeon’s profits, but if he got greedy, he might lose out on the 2 million won as well.</p>  
  
<p>'First, let’s put out the urgent fire.'</p>  
  
<p>Opportunities like this were rare. 2 million won was enough to cover a month’s living expenses. Jin-Woo accepted the offer.</p>  
  
<p>“I’ll be there in 15 minutes.”</p>  
  
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\*\*CHAPTER END\*\*