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\*\*CHAPTER START\*\*  
  
<h1>Solo Leveling - Chapter 2</h1>  
  
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Everything depended on Jin-Woo’s decision.   
Jin-Woo fiddled with the E-rank Essence Stone in his hand and glanced to the side.   
Joo-Hee shook her head at him.   
She seemed anxious.   
  
Truthfully, Jin-Woo was anxious too.   
Under normal circumstances, he would never take such a risk.   
He didn’t have the skill or the guts for it.   
But Jin-Woo had a younger sister who was about to enter university.   
  
‘I don’t have any savings…’   
Jin-Woo was 24 years old.   
He had given up on going to university himself because he couldn’t afford it.   
He didn’t want to pass that pain onto his sister.   
  
Now, even a single penny was precious.   
It wasn’t just Mr. Park who needed a large sum of money.   
Jin-Woo raised his hand.   
“I’ll go too.”   
  
A small sigh escaped from beside him.   
  
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### 2. The Double Dungeon   
  
The passage stretched endlessly.   
Strong Hunters like Mr. Song led the way at the front.   
Mr. Song, walking at the very front, illuminated the path with a small flame summoned on his palm.   
  
Beside him, Mr. Kim asked,   
“Aren’t we going too deep? We should start considering the time to exit soon.”   
“How long have we been walking?”   
Mr. Kim checked his wristwatch.   
“About… 40 minutes.”   
“The Gate will fully close an hour after we defeat the boss, so we still have about 20 minutes to spare.”   
“If we don’t see the boss within 20 minutes, we’ll retreat.”   
“Alright.”   
  
Mr. Song nodded silently, then pointed behind him with his thumb.   
“Mr. Kim, it’s too dark up front. Come stand behind me.”   
Mr. Kim stared at Mr. Song’s flame for a moment, then pulled out his phone and turned on the flashlight.   
Instantly, the path ahead became bright.   
“...”   
Mr. Song alternated between looking at his flame and the phone’s flashlight before silently rummaging through his pockets.   
  
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At the back of the group stood Jin-Woo, who had sustained severe injuries, and Joo-Hee, who had no combat skills.   
Jin-Woo scratched the back of his head.   
“Uh… I’m sorry.”   
“For what?”   
“For dragging you along.”   
“I’m fine, so don’t worry about it.”   
Jin-Woo glanced at Joo-Hee’s expression.   
She didn’t look fine at all.   
  
Tilting his head, Jin-Woo cautiously asked again,   
“Are you really okay?”   
Joo-Hee whipped her head around to face him.   
“Of course I’m not okay! Are you out of your mind? If the wound you got earlier was just a bit higher, it would’ve pierced your heart. And what about the injuries on your wrist and thigh? I barely managed to heal those, and now you’re talking about going into another dungeon? You don’t even know what’s in there!”   
  
Her words were so rapid that it felt like his mind was going numb.   
But she wasn’t wrong.   
If Joo-Hee wasn’t an exceptionally rare B-rank Healer-type Hunter, Jin-Woo wouldn’t just be struggling with his Hunter duties—he might not even be able to manage daily life for a while.   
  
‘Come to think of it, I keep relying on Joo-Hee.’   
Joo-Hee was a Healer-type Hunter, a rare and valuable asset.   
And not just any Healer—she was B-rank.   
The Association naturally requested her to heal Hunters every time a Gate appeared, and Jin-Woo had to sit in front of her almost every time he joined a raid.   
  
“Does it hurt? Just bear with it a little.”   
“You look familiar… Have we met before?”   
“You got hurt again?”   
“We seem to meet quite often.”   
“You’re Jin-Woo, right? Are you… okay?”   
“Maybe being a Hunter isn’t the right fit for you…”   
“…You’re here again.”   
“Stretch out your arm. No, you can patch that up at home. The fractured part, please.”   
  
Now, he felt not just gratitude but also guilt.   
“...”   
  
Seeing Jin-Woo’s dejected expression, Joo-Hee softened her tone slightly, perhaps feeling bad for her earlier outburst.   
“Are you really sorry?”   
“Yes.”   
  
Joo-Hee, who had been deep in thought, glanced at Jin-Woo and curled the corner of her lips.   
“If you’re that sorry… how about treating me to a meal?”   
  
It was a suggestion Jin-Woo never expected.   
Surprised, he looked at her, and Joo-Hee smiled mischievously, like a teenage girl.   
‘A teenage girl…’   
Well, Joo-Hee was just entering her 20s.   
Would she be 21 next year?   
  
If she had short hair instead of long hair and wore a school uniform instead of her current outfit, she’d look exactly like a high school girl.   
The thought of Joo-Hee in a school uniform made his face flush.   
  
As Jin-Woo hesitated, Joo-Hee puffed her cheeks like balloons.   
“What… You don’t want to have a meal with me?”   
  
Right then, commotion erupted from the front.   
“It’s here!”   
“The Boss Room!”   
  
Jin-Woo and Joo-Hee’s gazes shifted forward.   
A massive door blocked the path.   
The Hunters gathered around it.   
  
“A door at the end of a cave?”   
“Was there ever a room with a door before?”   
“This is a first for me…”   
“This… isn’t this dangerous?”   
  
Murmurs filled the air as the Hunters expressed their unease.   
With lives on the line, caution was natural.   
But sometimes, being too cautious could mean missing out on what needed to be done.   
  
Mr. Song judged this was one of those instances.   
“Did we come all this way just to return empty-handed?”   
Mr. Song placed his hand on the door.   
“If that’s how it is, so be it. I’ll go in alone if I have to.”   
  
Mr. Song was a C-rank Hunter with 10 years of experience.   
If he weren’t past his 60s, he’d have the skill to join a large guild.   
Seeing such a Hunter speak with confidence, the others’ unease began to ease.   
  
“Come to think of it…”   
A few Hunters recalled rumors about Double Dungeons.   
“They say Double Dungeons hold incredible treasures.”   
“I heard a mid-sized guild once discovered a Double Dungeon and grew into a large guild overnight.”   
“The Magic Beasts in the dungeon are all around the same level no matter where they are, so hunting them shouldn’t be too difficult…”   
  
If the rumors were true and this Double Dungeon contained incredible treasures, and if the Magic Beasts inside were only D-rank or E-rank like the ones they’d faced earlier…   
  
‘We can’t let the old man take all the treasure for himself.’   
‘Of course not.’   
‘There’s postnatal care, my kid’s tuition, and the rent increase…’   
  
The Hunters’ interests aligned.   
Jin-Woo also steeled himself.   
  
‘I can’t return with just one E-rank Essence Stone. I need to at least take down one more D-rank, or even E-rank Magic Beast.’   
It didn’t have to be a Magic Beast.   
‘If we find any treasure…’   
  
Treasures or rare items found in dungeons were usually divided equally among the members.   
It was a different distribution system from hunting, where you only kept the Essence Stones of the beasts you killed.   
  
‘If I can get a share here, things will be a bit easier moving forward.’   
Jin-Woo swallowed hard.   
  
Seeing Jin-Woo’s determined face, Joo-Hee asked,   
“Is that the face of someone who’s a Hunter for fun?”   
Jin-Woo shrugged.   
“Who stakes their life on their job these days? Unless it’s a hobby.”   
“…What?”   
  
Joo-Hee looked utterly baffled when Mr. Song began pushing open the dungeon door.   
\*Grgrgrgrgrgr-!\*   
  
The heavy door, seemingly operated by some mechanism, opened easily despite Mr. Song’s elderly strength.   
\*Kwoong-!\*   
  
As the door swung open, the vast interior was revealed.   
The Hunters rushed inside.   
“Let’s go too.”   
Afraid of being left behind, Jin-Woo grabbed Joo-Hee’s wrist and led the way.   
“Ah…”   
Joo-Hee followed, her face slightly flushed.   
  
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As soon as the Hunters stepped inside, the torches lining the walls burst into flames.   
\*Whoosh!\*   
The space instantly brightened.   
“What’s this? The lights turned on?”   
“This is my first time seeing a dungeon like this.”   
“Something’s… different.”   
  
The Hunters looked around.   
The interior had the atmosphere of an ancient temple.   
An old, ominous temple hidden underground.   
Moss clung to the floor, walls, and ceiling.   
  
A few Hunters shivered.   
“It’s kind of eerie, don’t you think?”   
“Does it feel like… someone’s watching us?”   
  
Ignoring the frightened Hunters, a few of the stronger ones ventured deeper inside.   
“Tsk! Enough with the ominous talk.”   
“Let’s finish this quickly.”   
  
The interior was overwhelmingly large.   
A dome-shaped room.   
It seemed as large as several Seoul Olympic Stadiums combined—or even larger.   
Yet, it somehow felt cramped.   
  
The reason was obvious.   
“That… that thing…”   
“Surely that’s not the boss, is it?”   
  
At the far end sat something incomprehensibly massive, occupying a throne as large as itself.   
An enormous divine statue!   
“Good grief.”   
“Wow.”   
  
Exclamations escaped their lips.   
At that moment, the first image that came to Jin-Woo’s mind was the Statue of Liberty.   
If the Statue of Liberty were seated, wouldn’t it be about that size?   
  
Granted, the Statue of Liberty was female, while this divine statue was male.   
‘Maybe it’s even bigger than that…’   
  
The Hunters stood beneath the colossal statue’s feet, swallowing hard.   
It was clear they were all nervous, wondering if this was the boss.   
‘...’   
  
Luckily, the statue didn’t move.   
It was a relief.   
“Phew…”   
Mr. Song also let out a sigh of relief.   
  
“Alright, let’s spread out.”   
With some ease, the Hunters began scattering to search the area.   
  
“There don’t seem to be any Magic Beasts here, right?”   
“Right?”   
“Not even a single bug in sight.”   
  
The room with the divine statue was vast but structurally simple.   
Countless torches lined the walls, and in front of them stood stone statues slightly taller than a person.   
  
“They’re beautiful.”   
“They look like works of art.”   
  
The statues each held different objects.   
Some held weapons, others books, and some held musical instruments or torches.   
  
“It’s like…”   
“The carvings in a temple.”   
Mr. Song finished Mr. Kim’s thought.   
  
“Hm?”   
Mr. Song noticed something on the ground.   
“Is this… a magic circle?”   
  
An unfamiliar magic circle was drawn at the center of the temple.   
  
Then,   
“Mr. Song, sir! There’s something written here. Can you take a look?”   
  
One of the Hunters had found a peculiar statue in a corner and called out to Mr. Song.   
Mr. Song, who had been examining the magic circle, stood up.   
The other Hunters also crowded around the statue.   
It was the only one with wings, holding a stone tablet.   
  
What caught the Hunters’ attention was the script engraved on the tablet.   
As Mr. Song skimmed over it, he muttered,   
“Runic script.”   
  
Runic script.   
A script found only in dungeons, impossible to find anywhere on Earth. Only Hunters with awakened magic abilities could decipher it.   
  
“The Commandments of Karthenon Temple.”   
Mr. Song read the first line.   
  
Jin-Woo listened intently, his face tense, as Mr. Song narrated the tablet’s contents.   
Suddenly, someone grabbed his arm.   
He turned around to find Joo-Hee, her face pale with fear.   
  
\*\*CHAPTER END\*\*