# 21

\*\*CHAPTER START\*\*  
  
<h1>Solo Leveling - Chapter 21</h1>  
  
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<p>'The skin looks pretty tough... Can I deal damage with a dagger?'</p>  
  
<p>The dagger had a shorter reach compared to the steel sword he had used before. To inflict deep wounds, he needed to focus his strength more.</p>  
  
<p>Jin-Woo gripped the dagger in a reverse grip. It seemed easier to deal damage this way.</p>  
  
<p>"Kkruk."</p>  
  
<p>Finally, the spider stopped in front of Jin-Woo. It then raised its two front legs, forming a "ㄱ" shape.</p>  
  
<p>'What is it trying to do?'</p>  
  
<p>The question lingered only for a moment.</p>  
  
<p>Jin-Woo's eyes flashed.</p>  
  
<p>\*Bang!\*</p>  
  
<p>If he hadn’t instinctively twisted his body, the spider’s leg would have pierced his chest. The spider’s leg, which had stabbed the ground behind him, folded at the joint and rose again.</p>  
  
<p>\*Thud.\*</p>  
  
<p>Dust fell from the tip of the leg. Jin-Woo glanced back. A hollow hole had been punched through the stone floor.</p>  
  
<p>'If I get hit, it won’t just hurt.'</p>  
  
<p>Jin-Woo’s gaze sharpened. It was time to focus.</p>  
  
<p>'Here it comes!'</p>  
  
<p>\*Whoosh!\*</p>  
  
<p>The spider’s leg, which had just struck like a bullet, began to become visible.</p>  
  
<p>Left.</p>  
  
<p>Jin-Woo ducked his head to avoid the spider’s left leg.</p>  
  
<p>Right.</p>  
  
<p>He twisted his body to the side, dodging the spider’s right leg, and took a step forward.</p>  
  
<p>Right.</p>  
  
<p>He avoided the spider’s leg aiming for his head and took two more steps closer.</p>  
  
<p>Left. Right. Right. Left. Right. Right. Right. Left. Left.</p>  
  
<p>\*Bang! Bang! Bang! Bang! Bang! Bang! Bang! Bang! Bang!\*</p>  
  
<p>The spider’s legs pierced the ground with a deafening noise. Jin-Woo dodged each of the spider’s attacks one by one, closing the distance.</p>  
  
<p>Yoo Jin-Ho couldn’t believe his eyes.</p>  
  
<p>"What, what kind of person is he?"</p>  
  
<p>Even from a distance, the attacks looked so vicious that it made the back of his neck tingle. Yet, Jin-Woo was dodging them all right in front of the magic beast, closing the distance.</p>  
  
<p>His calm, efficient movements sent shivers down Jin-Ho’s spine.</p>  
  
<p>"Is he really an E-rank Hunter?"</p>  
  
<p>No, that couldn’t be. If it were him standing there instead of Sung Jin-Woo, his body would have already been torn to shreds. He wouldn’t have been able to dodge even one or two attacks properly.</p>  
  
<p>Yet, Jin-Woo hadn’t made a single mistake so far, dodging everything.</p>  
  
<p>An E-rank doing what he, a D-rank Hunter, couldn’t?</p>  
  
<p>There was only one conclusion.</p>  
  
<p>'...An illegal registrant!'</p>  
  
<p>Yoo Jin-Ho’s face darkened.</p>  
  
<p>Among talented Hunters, there were those who could freely control their mana. If they wanted, they could lower their rank. Hunters who hid a portion of their mana to receive a lower rank than they deserved.</p>  
  
<p>Such individuals were called 'illegal registrants.'</p>  
  
<p>And most illegal registrants often had very malicious intentions.</p>  
  
<p>'Like murderers who enjoy slaughtering low-rank Hunters in low-rank dungeons...'</p>  
  
<p>What happened in dungeons was known only to those involved, making it the perfect place to commit crimes.</p>  
  
<p>Yoo Jin-Ho swallowed hard. Suddenly, Jin-Woo seemed scarier than the spider.</p>  
  
<p>'Why did I even come to a place like this...'</p>  
  
<p>Yoo Jin-Ho felt like crying.</p>  
  
<p>\*Whoosh! Whoosh! Whoosh!\*</p>  
  
<p>Meanwhile, the spider’s attacks continued relentlessly. Jin-Woo dodged them all, confident of victory.</p>  
  
<p>As he gradually closed the distance, the spider’s head was now within range. The spider’s pattern was monotonous, making it easy to approach.</p>  
  
<p>'First, the eyes.'</p>  
  
<p>Targeting the weak points was the basics of a raid. He decided to start with the eyes, which seemed the weakest.</p>  
  
<p>'Now, all I have to do is drive the dagger into those eyes!'</p>  
  
<p>Just as Jin-Woo made up his mind, he felt the spider’s attacks slow down slightly.</p>  
  
<p>\*Whoosh! Whoosh!\*</p>  
  
<p>Was it because his eyes had adjusted to the fast attacks?</p>  
  
<p>\*Bang! Bang!\*</p>  
  
<p>No, that wasn’t it. Eyes could lie, but ears couldn’t. The loud noise of the legs striking the ground had slowed down by a beat.</p>  
  
<p>Jin-Woo, who prided himself on his excellent hearing, suddenly felt a foreboding premonition.</p>  
  
<p>Upon closer inspection, the muscles around the spider’s mouth were trembling slightly.</p>  
  
<p>'Why is it trying to open its mouth at this timing?'</p>  
  
<p>Jin-Woo, who was about to leap toward the spider’s head three meters above, sensed something ominous. He quickly changed direction, leaping sideways instead of upward.</p>  
  
<p>At that moment.</p>  
  
<p>\*Swoosh!\*</p>  
  
<p>A thick liquid sprayed from the spider’s mouth. Jin-Woo, who had rolled on the ground, regained his balance and looked back. The ground where he had just been standing was smoking and turning black.</p>  
  
<p>\*Sizzle—\*</p>  
  
<p>The stone floor melted away. Jin-Woo swallowed hard.</p>  
  
<p>'If I had jumped up as planned...'</p>  
  
<p>It wouldn’t have been just the rocks melting.</p>  
  
<p>As if sensing Jin-Woo’s unease, the spider quickly closed in.</p>  
  
<p>\*Sssssss.\*</p>  
  
<p>Jin-Woo looked up. The spider was right in front of him.</p>  
  
<p>\*Whoosh!\*</p>  
  
<p>Jin-Woo jumped in place, dodging the spider’s leg.</p>  
  
<p>\*Bang!\*</p>  
  
<p>The creature’s attacks resumed.</p>  
  
<p>"Damn it!"</p>  
  
<p>Several times, Jin-Woo got close to the spider’s head, but he had to retreat to avoid the digestive fluid. With the spider’s attack patterns now doubled, it became incredibly tricky to deal with.</p>  
  
<p>If he dodged the legs and got close, the digestive fluid would pour out. If he moved away to avoid the fluid, the legs would attack.</p>  
  
<p>"Damn it!"</p>  
  
<p>Frustrated, he tried attacking the legs with the dagger. But the thick skin covering the legs didn’t even get scratched, no matter how much he slashed.</p>  
  
<p>Jin-Woo bit his lower lip.</p>  
  
<p>'This won’t do.'</p>  
  
<p>The spider only used its two front legs to attack, while Jin-Woo was using his entire body to dodge. It was obvious who would tire first.</p>  
  
<p>'Fatigue.'</p>  
  
<p>[Fatigue: 57]</p>  
  
<p>Sure enough, his fatigue was rising rapidly. If it reached 70, his speed would decrease, and if it exceeded 90, he’d be out of breath and find it hard to move.</p>  
  
<p>Time was running out.</p>  
  
<p>'If only I could get closer faster...'</p>  
  
<p>Speed. Speed was the problem.</p>  
  
<p>\*Bang! Bang! Bang! Bang!\*</p>  
  
<p>'Wait, speed?'</p>  
  
<p>Something flashed through Jin-Woo’s mind as he narrowly dodged the barrage of legs.</p>  
  
<p>'That’s it!'</p>  
  
<p>The only skill he could use. He had forgotten about it because he hadn’t needed to use it yet.</p>  
  
<p>'Dash!'</p>  
  
<p>[Skill: Dash has been activated.]</p>  
  
<p>[Movement speed increased by 30%. Mana decreases by 1 per minute while active.]</p>  
  
<p>With the message, Jin-Woo’s body sped up as if boosted. Dodging the spider’s legs became much easier.</p>  
  
<p>\*Whoosh! Whoosh! Whoosh!\*</p>  
  
<p>\*Bang! Bang! Bang!\*</p>  
  
<p>He swiftly passed through the lightning-fast strikes of the spider’s legs and arrived in front of the spider in an instant. The panicked spider quickly sprayed digestive fluid.</p>  
  
<p>\*Swoosh!\*</p>  
  
<p>But with his increased speed, Jin-Woo had more room to maneuver. He easily dodged the fluid and leaped toward the spider’s head.</p>  
  
<p>\*Stab!\*</p>  
  
<p>The dagger slashed diagonally across the spider’s eye.</p>  
  
<p>[Effect: Paralysis has been activated.]</p>  
  
<p>[The target’s resistance is high, canceling the effect.]</p>  
  
<p>[Effect: Bleeding has been activated.]</p>  
  
<p>[The target’s health decreases by 1% per second.]</p>  
  
<p>"Yes!"</p>  
  
<p>The special effect of the dagger, 'Kasaka’s Venom Fang,' had successfully caused bleeding.</p>  
  
<p>"Kkrrrraaak!"</p>  
  
<p>The spider let out a screech and staggered. Jin-Woo didn’t miss the opportunity. As soon as he landed, he jumped again, climbing onto the spider’s body and reaching its head.</p>  
  
<p>The spider flailed its legs wildly, but Jin-Woo wasn’t one to be caught by blind attacks.</p>  
  
<p>\*Bang! Bang! Bang!\*</p>  
  
<p>Only the ground suffered, with more holes being punched into it. From atop the spider’s head, Jin-Woo repeatedly stabbed its eyes with the dagger.</p>  
  
<p>\*Stab! Stab! Stab!\*</p>  
  
<p>"Kkrrrraaak!"</p>  
  
<p>\*Stab! Stab!\*</p>  
  
<p>"Kkrrrooak!"</p>  
  
<p>The spider thrashed wildly, but Jin-Woo held on, relentlessly stabbing its head.</p>  
  
<p>"Kkrrruk!"</p>  
  
<p>The spider began to stagger. The damage was taking its toll. Jin-Woo’s hands moved faster and faster.</p>  
  
<p>Finally, the massive spider’s body tilted.</p>  
  
<p>\*Thud!\*</p>  
  
<p>But Jin-Woo didn’t stop. He continued until the spider’s life was completely extinguished.</p>  
  
<p>\*Stab! Stab! Stab!\*</p>  
  
<p>"Kruk, krrr."</p>  
  
<p>With the spider’s final breath, a message appeared.</p>  
  
<p>[You have defeated the Dungeon Boss.]</p>  
  
<p>[You leveled up!]</p>  
  
<p>[You leveled up!]</p>  
  
<p>[You leveled up!]</p>  
  
<p>"Yes!"</p>  
  
<p>Jin-Woo, covered in the spider’s blood, raised both hands in triumph. Being a boss, his level had increased by three.</p>  
  
<p>"Status Window."</p>  
  
<p>Name: Sung Jin-Woo</p>  
  
<p>Level: 21</p>  
  
<p>Job: None</p>  
  
<p>Title: Wolf Slayer</p>  
  
<p>HP: 2600</p>  
  
<p>MP: 391</p>  
  
<p>Fatigue: 0</p>  
  
<p>[Stats]</p>  
  
<p>Strength: 53 Stamina: 30 Agility: 38 Intelligence: 30 Senses: 32</p>  
  
<p>(Available Stat Points: 0)</p>  
  
<p>[Skills]</p>  
  
<p>Passive Skills: (Unknown) Lv.MAX, Tenacity Lv.1</p>  
  
<p>Active Skills: Dash Lv.1</p>  
  
<p>He had jumped from level 18 to 21 in one go. But that wasn’t all.</p>  
  
<p>Along with the level-up messages, another message appeared.</p>  
  
<p>\*Ding.\*</p>  
  
<p>[As your level has exceeded 20, the 'Shop: Purchase' feature is now available.]</p>  
  
<p>'Finally, I can use gold?'</p>  
  
<p>It was good news. But there was no time to leisurely browse the shop here.</p>  
  
<p>\*Rumble.\*</p>  
  
<p>The cave shook slightly.</p>  
  
<p>[As the Dungeon Boss has been defeated, the dungeon entrance will disappear in 1 hour.]</p>  
  
<p>[Remaining time: 59 minutes 58 seconds.]</p>  
  
<p>They had to leave before the gate closed. He could check the shop later.</p>  
  
<p>As Jin-Woo descended to the ground, he noticed a glimmering light around the middle of the spider’s head.</p>  
  
<p>'An item?'</p>  
  
<p>But unlike with monsters, there was no item discovery message or automatic acquisition.</p>  
  
<p>What was it?</p>  
  
<p>After a moment of thought, Jin-Woo quickly realized.</p>  
  
<p>'Ah, the Essence Stone.'</p>  
  
<p>No matter how busy he was, he couldn’t leave it behind. Jin-Woo pulled out the Essence Stone hidden inside the spider’s head. A C-rank Essence Stone from a boss’s head would easily be worth ten million won.</p>  
  
<p>It wasn’t a bad reward for a hard-fought victory.</p>  
  
<p>Jin-Woo hopped down from the spider’s head.</p>  
  
<p>\*Thud.\*</p>  
  
<p>He landed lightly and turned around, only to see more glimmering lights from the spider’s abdomen. And there were several of them!</p>  
  
<p>Jin-Woo was puzzled. He had heard that a magic beast could sometimes drop two or three Essence Stones, but there were too many lights for them all to be Essence Stones.</p>  
  
<p>'What are they?'</p>  
  
<p>He sliced open the abdomen with his dagger and tore through the stomach, revealing the remains of half-digested insect magic beasts. The lights were shimmering inside them.</p>  
  
<p>"Could it be?"</p>  
  
<p>Jin-Woo checked each insect one by one. Sure enough, they all contained Essence Stones. Some were small, partially digested, but many were intact.</p>  
  
<p>In total, there were over ten.</p>  
  
<p>"Jackpot!"</p>  
  
<p>He had come to pay the rent but ended up with enough for a down payment on a house.</p>  
  
<p>"Hyung-nim."</p>  
  
<p>Jin-Woo turned to see Yoo Jin-Ho standing there.</p>  
  
<p>"Here, let me carry these for you."</p>  
  
<p>Yoo Jin-Ho carefully packed Jin-Woo’s Essence Stones into his equipment bag. Then, he took out a thermos from the corner of the bag and poured its contents into the lid.</p>  
  
<p>"Hyung-nim, you must be thirsty. Here, drink this. It’s water."</p>  
  
<p>The cold water was so chilled that condensation formed on the lid.</p>  
  
<p>'Why is he doing things I didn’t even ask for?'</p>  
  
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\*\*CHAPTER END\*\*