# 24

\*\*CHAPTER START\*\*  
  
<h1>Solo Leveling - Chapter 24</h1>  
  
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Yoo Jin-Ho emphasized the word \*‘justifiable’\* particularly strongly.  
  
‘Indeed...’   
That was undoubtedly the safest way to secure the Essence Stones.   
The Essence Stones were currently ownerless.   
No matter how much greed Hwang Dong-Seok had shown, he couldn’t take the Essence Stones with him to the afterlife.   
Only one person, Yoo Jin-Ho, held ownership of the Essence Stones.   
And now, that Yoo Jin-Ho was voluntarily offering to hand them over.   
If it were a forced seizure, he’d refuse, but...  
  
‘Why turn away good fortune when it rolls right to you?’   
Without his help, Yoo Jin-Ho would have already been dead or taken hostage.   
Thinking about it that way, the term \*‘justifiable compensation’\* made quite a bit of sense.   
  
Seeing Jin-Woo’s expression soften, Yoo Jin-Ho became confident in his assumption.   
‘As expected, he’s not refusing the Essence Stones because they’re justly earned through hunting Hwang Dong-Seok’s group.’   
Though the two had vastly different interpretations of \*‘justifiable’\*, neither of them realized it.   
  
“Alright.”   
At Jin-Woo’s approval, Yoo Jin-Ho’s face lit up.   
Starting to feel a sense of reverence for Jin-Woo, who strictly adhered to his beliefs, Yoo Jin-Ho was taken aback when Jin-Woo’s face turned expressionless again.   
“But how do I trust you?”   
The initial purpose had resurfaced in Jin-Woo’s mind.   
  
From the start, the goal hadn’t been to instill fear for personal gain.   
It had been about preventing troublesome situations before they even began.   
“How could I betray Hyung-nim, who has saved my life multiple times?”   
“You could break your promise and start blabbing everywhere, couldn’t you?”   
In truth, even if he did, it wouldn’t be a big issue.   
  
The deaths of Hwang Dong-Seok’s group were 100% self-defense.   
The opponents were eight fully armed individuals.   
They even initiated the attack with powerful magic.   
With the way laws had changed since Hunters appeared, he could definitely be acquitted.   
  
Still, Jin-Woo wanted to avoid unnecessary commotion if possible.   
For that, he needed Yoo Jin-Ho’s cooperation.   
Though the method of securing cooperation was questionable, it was undoubtedly effective.   
  
“Hmm?”   
Jin-Woo stared at Yoo Jin-Ho, demanding an answer.   
Yoo Jin-Ho’s face turned serious.   
“I’d never do something so cowardly. Especially not to the person who saved my life.”   
  
‘Wait a minute...’   
That look in his eyes... it felt familiar. It was the same look Yoo Jin-Ho had when he refused Hwang Dong-Seok’s offer to join them earlier.   
  
‘This guy... he’s serious.’   
Give and take.   
Yoo Jin-Ho had chosen Jin-Woo at a life-or-death crossroads.   
He had decided to trust Jin-Woo and stand against the eight Hunters.   
So, Jin-Woo decided to trust Yoo Jin-Ho as well.   
  
Though not right away... after planting a bit of caution in him.   
Jin-Woo picked up Hwang Dong-Seok’s shield, which had been discarded on the ground.   
“The back of my head still stings from the hit Hwang Dong-Seok gave me.”   
  
After examining the shield, Jin-Woo threw it with all his might toward the cave wall.   
\*BANG!\*   
More than half of the shield embedded itself deep into the wall.   
Yoo Jin-Ho broke out in a cold sweat and gulped.   
  
“You won’t disappoint me, will you, our dongsaeng?”   
“O-Of course, Hyung-nim.”   
  
Then, it happened.   
The dungeon shook violently once again.   
\*Kugugugugu—!\*   
Time was running out.   
  
Having no intention of harming Yoo Jin-Ho from the start, Jin-Woo decided this was enough.   
He commanded Yoo Jin-Ho, “Gather all the Essence Stones. We’re leaving the dungeon.”   
“Thank you, Hyung-nim!”   
  
Yoo Jin-Ho stood up and bowed his head at a perfect 90-degree angle.   
A smile returned to his face.   
While Yoo Jin-Ho went to gather the Essence Stones, Jin-Woo rummaged through Hwang Dong-Seok’s pockets.   
  
‘I should take what’s mine too.’   
The promised daily wage of 200,000 won.   
He couldn’t afford to miss a single penny.   
Hwang Dong-Seok’s wallet was filled with dozens of 50,000 won bills.   
Counting them, there were 45 in total.   
A little over 2 million won.   
  
It seemed he had prepared the money in advance, as he’d promised to pay in cash immediately after the job.   
After all, he couldn’t use Tail-Cutting every time.   
“I’ll take the wages now.”   
  
Jin-Woo gave an acknowledgment to no one in particular and left the spot first.   
Yoo Jin-Ho, who had returned late with a bag full of Essence Stones, looked around for Jin-Woo, who had already disappeared.   
  
“Hyung-nim?”   
The only things around were the bodies of the Hunters Jin-Woo had taken down.   
“Eep!”   
With a pale face, Yoo Jin-Ho hurriedly chased after Jin-Woo, fearing he might get left behind.   
  
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The Association Investigation Department arrived at the scene.   
The procedure for deaths during a raid was simple.   
Just report the situation to the Association and undergo an investigation.   
This time, the investigator was a stern-looking middle-aged woman.   
  
“May I have your names?”   
“Sung Jin-Woo.”   
“I’m Yoo Jin-Ho.”   
  
Since deaths during dungeon raids weren’t uncommon, the procedure was mostly formal.   
It would simply be recorded as is.   
Unless there was something suspicious, of course.   
  
“...But all the C-rank Hunters were wiped out, and only one D-rank and one E-rank made it out?”   
The investigator adjusted her glasses as she asked. Her eyes narrowed.   
  
‘In most raids, the casualties are usually the weakest members of the team...’   
After closely examining the two, she noticed something and raised her voice.   
“Oh my!”   
  
Her eyes sparkled as she approached.   
“Isn’t this Calion, the new longsword released by Maya Corporation this year? Oh my, and this... is the Royal Series Shield crafted by the artisan Mr. Gredos?”   
Yoo Jin-Ho’s face brightened.   
  
“You know your weapons!”   
“Oh, not really. I just skim through the new product catalogs. Hohohoho!”   
The longsword was priced at 700 million won. The shield, 500 million won.   
  
Equipments made with Essence Stones and expensive materials surpassing billions were powerful enough to elevate a D-rank Hunter to C-rank or higher.   
The investigator’s mind automatically painted a picture of the situation inside the dungeon.   
  
‘With equipment of this caliber...’   
It seemed possible for a D-rank Hunter to defeat the boss alone, even if C-rank Hunters were wiped out.   
‘The E-rank Hunter probably hid in a corner and barely escaped with his life.’   
  
Though, in reality, it was the exact opposite.   
Regardless, she came to a conclusion.   
The likelihood of someone with the financial means to purchase such equipment betraying their comrades for a few Essence Stones was slim.   
  
Moreover, an E-rank Hunter alone couldn’t have taken down multiple C-rank Hunters, so the deaths of Hwang Dong-Seok and the seven others could only be seen as an unfortunate accident.   
“I understand.”   
The investigator closed her notebook with a satisfied expression.   
  
“The investigation is concluded. You’re free to leave now. Thank you for your cooperation despite the difficult circumstances.”   
“Good work.”   
Jin-Woo spoke on behalf of both of them.   
  
The investigator left the scene as quickly as she had arrived in her sedan.   
“Hyung-nim, you’ve worked hard too.”   
Yoo Jin-Ho bowed deeply at a 90-degree angle.   
Even after exiting the Gate, his respectful demeanor remained unchanged.   
  
It seemed he had been thoroughly intimidated.   
Jin-Woo clicked his tongue inwardly.   
“You worked hard too.”   
“What did I even do? Hyung-nim did all the work. Here, your Essence Stones.”   
  
Jin-Woo took the bag Yoo Jin-Ho handed over with both hands, bowing respectfully.   
The bag was filled to the brim with Essence Stones.   
  
The highest value of an Essence Stone from a C-rank Gate was 10 million won.   
Even the smallest ones were worth several hundred thousand won.   
Jin-Woo roughly counted the number of Essence Stones and couldn’t help but let out a sigh of amazement.   
  
‘How much is this worth...?’   
He struggled to suppress the laughter threatening to spill out.   
But then, suddenly, droplets of water began to fall into the bag.   
  
\*Plop.\*   
\*Plop.\*   
Jin-Woo looked up.   
Raindrops were beginning to fall from the sky, which had been gradually darkening since the afternoon.   
  
‘Good thing I sent her with an umbrella...’   
Jin-Woo smiled faintly, thinking of his younger sister.   
  
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Late at night.   
As soon as he arrived home, Jin-Woo summoned his status window.   
“Stats!”   
  
[Stats]   
Strength: 53   
Stamina: 30   
Agility: 38   
Intelligence: 30   
Senses: 32   
(Available Stat Points: 10)   
  
The 10 points received as a reward for the Emergency Quest were still unused.   
His body itched to use them.   
  
In terms of Daily Quests, it would take 3 days and 1 more point to accumulate this much, and in terms of levels, two whole levels to earn this many points.   
‘Agility is the top priority. Next is Senses.’   
He allocated 7 points to Agility and the remaining 3 to Senses.   
  
[Stats]   
Strength: 53   
Stamina: 30   
Agility: 45   
Intelligence: 30   
Senses: 35   
(Available Stat Points: 0)   
  
“Okay.”   
His stats had increased evenly.   
Agility was now catching up to Strength, and Senses had already reached 35 points.   
  
Once Agility caught up to Strength, he planned to invest points into Stamina.   
He wanted to raise all stats evenly, except for Intelligence, whose usage he still didn’t understand.   
  
“Let’s check today’s achievements.”   
Name: Sung Jin-Woo   
Level: 21   
Job: None   
Title: Wolf Slayer   
HP: 2600   
MP: 390   
Fatigue: 0   
  
[Stats]   
Strength: 53   
Stamina: 30   
Agility: 45   
Intelligence: 30   
Senses: 35   
(Available Stat Points: 0)   
  
[Skills]   
Passive Skills: (Unknown) Lv.MAX, Tenacity Lv.1   
Active Skills: Dash Lv.1, Killing Intent Lv.1   
  
The three-level leap and the newly acquired skill, \*Killing Intent\*, caught his eye. The additional 10 points had significantly boosted his stats.   
  
Even this much was an impressive achievement, but what he gained today didn’t end there.   
‘The 2 million won from the daily wage...’   
And the bag full of Essence Stones.   
Jin-Woo counted the number of Essence Stones.   
  
‘11 from the spiders, 38 from Hwang Dong-Seok’s team.’   
Total of 49!   
Even at 5 million won per piece, that was over 200 million won.   
  
“200 million in a single day of hunting...”   
The amount grew exponentially since he was keeping the money that would’ve been split among ten, or rather, nine people.   
A stroke of luck he hadn’t expected had rolled in like a vine full of fruit.   
  
‘Now I just need to sell these.’   
Selling Essence Stones wasn’t difficult.   
There were so many buyers that they’d disappear as soon as they were put up for sale.   
  
The problem lay in where to sell them.   
There were many private transactions, and guilds or corporations often bought them in bulk.   
Given the quantity this time, it seemed better to sell them directly to specialized businesses rather than through private or online transactions.   
  
‘Can’t I just sell them to a shop?’   
It would be convenient if shops bought Essence Stones at their proper value like junk items.   
While pondering these thoughts, Jin-Woo pushed the bag of Essence Stones into a corner.   
  
Then, another achievement from today came to mind.   
‘I can now use the shop’s purchase feature, right?’   
Jin-Woo immediately summoned the shop.   
Though not a large sum, the gold he had accumulated while running the Hapjeong Station Instant Dungeon still remained untouched.   
  
“Purchase.”   
\*Ding.\*   
With a familiar electronic sound, an endless list of purchasable items began to appear.   
  
From cheap potions and miscellaneous trinkets to expensive armor and flashy weapons.   
Many items were being sold for gold.   
Naturally, the more expensive ones had better stats.   
Some of the top-tier items even went for 10 billion gold.   
  
“Whoa... 10 billion.”   
His current gold was a mere 1.12 billion.   
It was a laughably insufficient amount to buy anything useful.   
  
But there was no need to rush.   
He had plenty of time.   
‘If I just keep accumulating gold, I can buy all this, right?’   
Jin-Woo hummed a tune as he continued browsing the high-priced items.   
  
Another reason to run dungeons had been added.   
He was already looking forward to tomorrow’s quest and the Random Box rewards.  
  
\*\*CHAPTER END\*\*