# 28

\*\*CHAPTER START\*\*  
  
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<h1>Solo Leveling - Chapter 28</h1>  
  
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Chapter 28  
His heart began to beat faster.   
The size of the box was familiar.   
His hands moved quickly to tear it open.   
\*As expected!\*   
Jin-Woo’s eyes widened.   
Inside the box was a golden key.   
It was the key to the Instant Dungeon he had been eagerly waiting for.   
Soon, information about the key appeared.   
\*Ding!\*   
[Item: Demon Castle Key]   
Acquisition Difficulty: S-rank   
Type: Key   
A key that allows access to the ‘Dungeon: Demon Castle’. Can be used at Daesung Tower in Songpa District.   
“S-rank?”   
Jin-Woo’s voice rose.   
Of course, there was no guarantee that the acquisition difficulty directly reflected the dungeon’s difficulty.   
But it didn’t seem unrelated either.   
The Instant Dungeon he entered with an E-rank key was as easy as an E-rank Gate’s dungeon. But what if the dungeon’s difficulty was S-rank?   
It was impossible to predict whether even a team of S-rank Hunters could clear it or not.   
Was it 50-50 odds?   
From B-rank Gates onwards, the difficulty exploded, and S-rank Gates had rarely opened anywhere in the world.   
‘One of them opened on Jeju Island.’   
After that, Jeju Island became a deserted land where no one could live.   
Jin-Woo stared intently at the key in his hand.   
‘Is this really what I wanted?’   
One thing that was fortunate was that this key allowed ‘access’, unlike the previous key that only allowed ‘teleportation’.   
This meant he could escape at any time.   
And even if the key suddenly disappeared, he still had one Return Stone left unused in his inventory.   
There was no fear of being trapped behind invisible walls like before.   
‘It’s a hard-earned opportunity. I can’t waste it.’   
He wanted to see with his own eyes whether this key was truly what he desired.   
  
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## 2. Demon Castle   
In front of Daesung Tower.   
A skyscraper that soared into the sky, a hundred stories tall, seemed to pierce the heavens.   
It was truly a skyscraper.   
Just looking up at it made one’s mind dizzy.   
Perhaps because it was night, there were few pedestrians around.   
The empty streets exuded a gloomy atmosphere.   
‘But just in case…’   
Jin-Woo looked around and pulled the hood of his jacket low over his face.   
If a person disappeared and reappeared without a Gate opening, it could cause a commotion.   
Moreover, with surveillance cameras installed all around, it was better to be cautious and stay out of sight.   
Coincidentally, someone noticed Jin-Woo.   
‘Who’s that guy?’   
A suspicious figure wandering around the building late at night with his hood pulled low.   
A security guard inside the building, watching Jin-Woo, stood up suspiciously.   
But as the guard walked toward the door, he suddenly stopped and widened his eyes.   
“Wha—what?”   
The guard rushed out in surprise.   
The man who was clearly walking this way had suddenly vanished.   
Without a trace.   
No matter how much he looked around, there wasn’t even a single ant in sight.   
The guard tilted his head in confusion and turned back.   
“What the… It’s like ghosts are playing tricks here.”   
As the guard was about to go back inside, he noticed something flickering out of the corner of his eye.   
“Ah, ahh!”   
Startled, he fell back onto the ground.   
“Wha—what is this!”   
The guard screamed with a pale face.   
A hand floating in the air soon disappeared into thin air.   
Jin-Woo pulled back his outstretched hand.   
‘It’s connected to the outside.’   
Unlike last time, there was no invisible wall blocking him.   
The key was still in his pocket, intact. This meant he could leave this place anytime he wanted.   
‘Exit secured…’   
Given the key’s high acquisition difficulty, he was much more cautious than usual.   
Jin-Woo took off his hood and looked back.   
“…”   
The scene before him was one that could make anyone groan.   
As he had taken a few steps toward Daesung Tower, the world before his eyes had transformed in an instant.   
Could this even be called a dungeon?   
It was a completely different world.   
Instead of Daesung Tower, there was an enormous, towering structure.   
‘Should I call it a tower or a castle?’   
The tower, which seemed to stretch endlessly into the sky, was engulfed in crimson flames.   
It wasn’t on fire—it was as if the tower itself was made of fire.   
“The Burning Tower.”   
This name suited the place better than “Demon Castle.”   
Jin-Woo began walking toward the tower.   
\*Whoosh!\*   
The closer he got, the louder the sound of the raging flames became.   
‘Can I even go inside?’   
And even if he could, that was another problem.   
If, like the previous dungeon that was based on a subway station, this dungeon was based on Daesung Tower, then he would have to climb a hundred floors to clear it.   
He couldn’t even begin to calculate how long that would take.   
‘Huh?’   
Jin-Woo stopped in his tracks.   
He felt a powerful presence near the gate.   
Looking around carefully, he noticed a massive black beast, the size of a bull, curled up asleep in the corner near the gate.   
Jin-Woo cautiously summoned Kasaka’s Venom Fang.   
\*Ding!\*   
[Item: Kasaka’s Venom Fang]   
Acquisition Difficulty: C-rank   
Type: Dagger   
Attack Power +25   
A dagger made from Kasaka’s Venom Fang. Remnants of Kasaka’s venom remain, granting paralysis and bleeding effects upon attack. Can be stored in your inventory or sold at a shop.   
Effect ‘Paralysis’: The target has a chance to be immobilized.   
Effect ‘Bleeding’: The target’s health decreases by 1% per second.   
Its base attack power wasn’t particularly high, but its special effects had proven their worth in actual combat.   
‘If the paralysis effect can take it down easily, that’d be great.’   
Jin-Woo silenced his footsteps as much as possible.   
And slowly, he approached the beast.   
But he couldn’t fool the monster’s sense of smell. Soon, the beast began sniffing and rose to its feet.   
\*Tch.\*   
Jin-Woo clicked his tongue.   
The fully awakened beast turned all three of its heads toward Jin-Woo.   
[Gatekeeper of Hell: Cerberus]   
A massive dog with three heads.   
The red name written above the monster’s heads caught his attention.   
It was a sign that the monster was of a high level.   
‘If it’s red, is it on the same level as the Giant Centipede from the Penalty Zone?’   
Back then, he had been too busy running away from the centipede.   
After all, he had only been level 1 at the time.   
‘But now is different.’   
He had grown rapidly in a short time.   
The monster was probably strong, but it didn’t feel overwhelmingly so.   
His sharp senses told him he could handle it.   
He hadn’t raised his Senses Stat for nothing. He had consistently invested in it to determine whether to fight or flee.   
“Grrrrr!”   
Cerberus bared its fangs and began to threaten him.   
Jin-Woo glanced at the monster’s tail.   
A whip-like, elongated tail was burning with flames at the tip. Jin-Woo’s eyes gleamed sharply.   
‘Fangs and a tail. At least two attack patterns.’   
Jin-Woo swallowed dryly.   
Cerberus, which had been slowly closing the distance, stopped right in front of him and began sizing him up.   
‘Is it… looking for an opening?’   
As he thought that.   
The monster pounced.   
“Ruff!”   
Jin-Woo’s eyes widened.   
‘So fast!’   
Jin-Woo slid under the leaping Cerberus, avoiding its fangs.   
Cerberus landed and immediately turned around, lunging with all three of its maws.   
“Ruff, ruff-ruff!”   
Sharp fangs glinted between its maws.   
\*Ding!\*   
[‘Title: Wolf Slayer’ buff effect activated.]   
[Title: Wolf Slayer]   
A title given to skilled hunters who excel at hunting wolves. Increases all stats by 40% when fighting beast-type monsters.   
He felt his body grow lighter.   
‘Nice!’   
Jin-Woo dodged Cerberus and swung his dagger.   
\*Swish, swish, swish, swish!\*   
\*Clang, clang, clang!\*   
The sound of the dagger clashing against fangs echoed loudly. The dagger moved so fast it was almost invisible, but it was only barely blocking Cerberus’ attacks.   
‘Even with the buff, it’s this tough!’   
Cerberus’ agility far exceeded his expectations.   
Jin-Woo used his Killing Intent skill to try and turn the tide.   
[Skill: ‘Killing Intent’ activated.]   
[The target’s resistance is too high. The effect has been canceled.]   
Jin-Woo’s eyes widened.   
‘It didn’t work?’   
At that moment, Cerberus’ long tail whipped toward him.   
\*Swish!\*   
Jin-Woo reflexively ducked to avoid the tail.   
But his relentless movement came to a halt. And Cerberus didn’t miss that opening.   
One of Cerberus’ heads bit down hard on Jin-Woo’s left shoulder.   
“Argh!”   
Jin-Woo stabbed the dagger into the monster’s forehead with all his might.   
\*Thud!\*   
[Effect: ‘Paralysis’ activated.]   
[The target’s resistance is too high. The effect has been canceled.]   
[Effect: ‘Bleeding’ activated.]   
[The target’s resistance is too high. The effect has been canceled.]   
“Grrrr!”   
Cerberus let out a pained howl and fell back.   
Luckily, Jin-Woo managed to shake it off before the other heads could bite him, but his left shoulder was already torn to shreds.   
The monstrous bite force was terrifying.   
He tried to move his left arm, but it wouldn’t budge.   
Jin-Woo’s brow furrowed.   
He had dealt some damage to Cerberus, but in terms of severity, he was in far worse shape.   
‘If paralysis or bleeding had worked, things would’ve been different…’   
Jin-Woo clicked his tongue as he glared at Cerberus.   
Then, something happened.   
‘Huh?’   
Cerberus’ eyes began to turn red.   
“Grrrrr.”   
A chilling sensation washed over him.   
‘What’s this?’   
[Gatekeeper of Hell: Cerberus activates skill: ‘Rage’.]   
[Rage state lasts for 3 minutes.]   
[All of Cerberus’ stats increase by 2x.]   
[Cerberus feels no pain.]   
Jin-Woo exclaimed.   
“What?!”   
A magic beast—no, a monster—using a skill?!   
In an instant, Cerberus kicked off the ground.   
‘Damn it!’   
Before he could react, Cerberus was already in front of him.   
He swung his dagger in a hurry, but it only grazed the monster’s head.   
All three maws bit down on Jin-Woo simultaneously.   
\*Crunch!\*   
“Urgh!”   
Jin-Woo gritted his teeth.   
His neck, side, and thigh were all being torn apart.   
Cerberus charged at full speed and slammed Jin-Woo into the castle gate.   
\*Bang!\*   
Jin-Woo’s health dropped to the bottom in an instant.   
“Cough!”   
[Health: 411/3,602]   
\*Ding!\*   
[Health has fallen below 30%. Skill: ‘Tenacity’ activated.]   
[Damage received is reduced by 50%.]   
Luckily, thanks to the physical damage reduction and Passive Tenacity skill, he avoided instant death.   
“Guh…”   
Jin-Woo’s eyes widened.   
  
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\*\*CHAPTER END\*\*