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\*\*CHAPTER START\*\*  
  
<h1>Solo Leveling - Chapter 31</h1>  
  
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<p>Chapter 31</p>  
  
<p>“Yes. The prisoners are all C-rank, and the Surveillance Division Hunter is B-rank, so there’s no need to worry.”</p>  
  
<p>Kim Sang-Shik nodded.</p>  
  
<p>It was a well-known fact that it took more than ten C-rank Hunters to defeat a single B-rank Hunter.</p>  
  
<p>There was no reason to refuse the help of a high-rank B-rank Hunter who would both monitor and assist in the raid.</p>  
  
<p>‘One B-rank and three C-ranks…’</p>  
  
<p>Jin-Woo scanned the faces of the Surveillance Division Hunter and the substitute prisoners, tilting his head in confusion.</p>  
  
<p>‘Something feels off.’</p>  
  
<p>A subtle killing intent was emanating from them.</p>  
  
<p>Was this the effect of his Senses Stat?</p>  
  
<p>Or was it just unnecessary paranoia?</p>  
  
<p>Either way, an indescribable sense of unease washed over him.</p>  
  
<p>Jin-Woo whispered to Joo-Hee.</p>  
  
<p>“Joo-Hee, skip this raid.”</p>  
  
<p>Joo-Hee looked up at Jin-Woo and asked.</p>  
  
<p>“What about you?”</p>  
  
<p>Jin-Woo responded with a question instead of an answer.</p>  
  
<p>“What if I go?”</p>  
  
<p>“Then I’ll go too.”</p>  
  
<p>Her face showed that she was determined to follow him no matter what.</p>  
  
<p>‘She’s probably worried about me…’</p>  
  
<p>Jin-Woo knew from past experience that Joo-Hee could be quite stubborn when she made that face.</p>  
  
<p>‘Since I’m here, it should be fine.’</p>  
  
<p>After all, he had once taken on Hwang Dong-Seok’s group, which included five C-rank Hunters, all by himself.</p>  
  
<p>Jin-Woo nodded.</p>  
  
<p>“Alright, then.”</p>  
  
<p>The Surveillance Division Hunter finished the paperwork and stepped in front of the gathered Hunters.</p>  
  
<p>“I’m Kang Tae-Shik from the Surveillance Division. I assume you’ve already heard the explanation. I’ll keep a close eye on them, so don’t worry about those guys.”</p>  
  
<p>Kang Tae-Shik gestured to the prisoners.</p>  
  
<p>The prisoners trudged over and held out their hands.</p>  
  
<p>Kang Tae-Shik skillfully removed their handcuffs.</p>  
  
<p>“Ugh, I thought I was going to suffocate.”</p>  
  
<p>“Are we slaves or something? Is it okay to drag us around like this?”</p>  
  
<p>The prisoners grumbled as they rubbed their freed wrists.</p>  
  
<p>Kang Tae-Shik ignored them and turned back to the Hunters.</p>  
  
<p>“Who’s going to take the lead today?”</p>  
  
<p>Song Chi-Yeol, who usually took on the leader role, raised his hand halfway.</p>  
  
<p>Kang Tae-Shik nodded.</p>  
  
<p>“Understood.”</p>  
  
<p>With Song Chi-Yeol at the front, the Hunters began to enter the Gate one by one.</p>  
  
<p>“Let’s go.”</p>  
  
<p>Jin-Woo also entered with Joo-Hee.</p>  
  
<p>Still shaken from the last incident, Joo-Hee lightly grabbed the end of Jin-Woo’s sleeve.</p>  
  
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<p>This dungeon was mainly populated by Goblins.</p>  
  
<p>Among the humanoid Magic Beasts, Goblins were classified as the weakest.</p>  
  
<p>The dungeon raid wasn’t difficult.</p>  
  
<p>“Kieeeek!”</p>  
  
<p>“Kiek!”</p>  
  
<p>These bizarre-looking little monsters were manageable even before they gained strength.</p>  
  
<p>Jin-Woo carefully took down the Goblins.</p>  
  
<p>“Kieeeek!”</p>  
  
<p>“Crack!”</p>  
  
<p>Joo-Hee and Song Chi-Yeol’s eyes widened as they watched Jin-Woo fight better than expected.</p>  
  
<p>“Wow.”</p>  
  
<p>Although he was hiding most of his strength, it was still a clear improvement from before.</p>  
  
<p>Joo-Hee approached and asked.</p>  
  
<p>“Have you been training somewhere?”</p>  
  
<p>“Well… I’ve been running every day.”</p>  
  
<p>“Running?”</p>  
  
<p>Joo-Hee tilted her head in confusion, but it wasn’t a lie.</p>  
  
<p>‘But… I’m not getting any experience points.’</p>  
  
<p>“Kieek!”</p>  
  
<p>[The enemy’s level is too low to gain experience points.]</p>  
  
<p>“Crack!”</p>  
  
<p>[The enemy’s level is too low to gain experience points.]</p>  
  
<p>Jin-Woo made a disappointed face.</p>  
  
<p>The message that the Goblins were too weak to provide experience points kept repeating.</p>  
  
<p>‘This is just…’</p>  
  
<p>Even the Essence Stones the Goblins dropped were of the lowest grade.</p>  
  
<p>Jin-Woo looked around.</p>  
  
<p>The C-rank prisoners, thrilled by their temporary freedom, were tearing through the Goblins with their weapons.</p>  
  
<p>“Kieeeek!”</p>  
  
<p>“Kek! Kek!”</p>  
  
<p>At this point, it was hard to tell who were the monsters and who were the humans.</p>  
  
<p>‘I don’t need to work too hard.’</p>  
  
<p>They weren’t giving experience points or making money, so there was no point.</p>  
  
<p>At the same time, another thought crossed his mind.</p>  
  
<p>‘If it’s always like this, maybe it’s better to leave the Hunters Association?’</p>  
  
<p>Most of the work the Association provided was raiding D and E-rank Gates.</p>  
  
<p>But if D and E-rank Gates didn’t help him level up, there was no need to participate in the Association’s raids.</p>  
  
<p>‘I can cover my mother’s hospital bills now.’</p>  
  
<p>He could leave the Association at any time.</p>  
  
<p>This was why money was good.</p>  
  
<p>As soon as he had money, his options expanded.</p>  
  
<p>While lost in these thoughts, the group ventured deeper into the dungeon.</p>  
  
<p>“Huh?”</p>  
  
<p>“Hmm…”</p>  
  
<p>Soon, a three-way fork appeared before them.</p>  
  
<p>Kang Tae-Shik suggested to Song Chi-Yeol.</p>  
  
<p>“The dungeon difficulty is lower than expected. How about we split up from here?”</p>  
  
<p>“Let’s do that.”</p>  
  
<p>Song Chi-Yeol agreed.</p>  
  
<p>Jin-Woo closed his eyes and expanded his senses.</p>  
  
<p>‘Which path has the boss?’</p>  
  
<p>He thought the boss might at least give him some experience points.</p>  
  
<p>Soon, the presence of the dungeon’s creatures began to register one by one in his senses.</p>  
  
<p>Jin-Woo opened his eyes and spoke to Song Chi-Yeol.</p>  
  
<p>“Let’s take the left path.”</p>  
  
<p>“Alright.”</p>  
  
<p>Jin-Woo, Song Chi-Yeol, and Joo-Hee took the left path, Kang Tae-Shik and the prisoners took the right, and the remaining two took the center path.</p>  
  
<p>Jin-Woo’s heart raced.</p>  
  
<p>‘The boss is at the end of this path.’</p>  
  
<p>Although not particularly strong, there was a unique and alien presence emanating from the end of the cave, different from the Goblins.</p>  
  
<p>He wanted to take down the boss quickly.</p>  
  
<p>But after only a few steps, a group of Goblins appeared.</p>  
  
<p>“Kik kik.”</p>  
  
<p>“Kiriririk.”</p>  
  
<p>“Kiek.”</p>  
  
<p>This time, there were about ten of them.</p>  
  
<p>Some wielded wooden clubs, others wooden swords, and some had long sticks with stone tips.</p>  
  
<p>They were armed to some extent… but they posed no threat.</p>  
  
<p>‘Aren’t these guys getting boring?’</p>  
  
<p>Jin-Woo frowned.</p>  
  
<p>It was just annoying to have so many of these weaklings around.</p>  
  
<p>“Ten of them…”</p>  
  
<p>“What should we do? Should we regroup with the others and come back?”</p>  
  
<p>But the other two were quite serious.</p>  
  
<p>“They’re just Goblins, so let’s try fighting them first.”</p>  
  
<p>“Okay.”</p>  
  
<p>Flames flickered at Song Chi-Yeol’s fingertips, and Joo-Hee prepared her healing magic.</p>  
  
<p>Jin-Woo scratched the back of his head.</p>  
  
<p>‘Even though we’re in a dungeon, I don’t feel any tension.’</p>  
  
<p>Was it because he had become so much stronger compared to before?</p>  
  
<p>He was starting to realize just how much he had changed.</p>  
  
<p>Song Chi-Yeol asked Jin-Woo.</p>  
  
<p>“Mr. Sung, are you ready?”</p>  
  
<p>“Yes.”</p>  
  
<p>Jin-Woo carefully took down the Goblins, matching the rhythm of his teammates.</p>  
  
<p>Just as they were diligently clearing the dungeon, a series of screams echoed from somewhere.</p>  
  
<p>“Aaaaaah!”</p>  
  
<p>“Aaaah!”</p>  
  
<p>It wasn’t the Goblins.</p>  
  
<p>It was definitely a human voice.</p>  
  
<p>Jin-Woo, Song Chi-Yeol, and Lee Joo-Hee looked at each other.</p>  
  
<p>After a brief moment of silence, another horrifying scream erupted.</p>  
  
<p>“Aaaaaah!”</p>  
  
<p>Song Chi-Yeol’s face hardened.</p>  
  
<p>“Let’s go.”</p>  
  
<p>The three of them quickly ran toward the source of the sound.</p>  
  
<p>Jin-Woo could have outpaced the other two, but he matched their speed for their safety.</p>  
  
<p>After running for a while, Joo-Hee spotted someone and shouted.</p>  
  
<p>“There’s someone…!”</p>  
  
<p>There, the Surveillance Division Hunter Kang Tae-Shik was kneeling, covered in blood.</p>  
  
<p>Kang Tae-Shik shouted.</p>  
  
<p>“Be, be careful! They might still be somewhere around!”</p>  
  
<p>After struggling to speak, Kang Tae-Shik collapsed to the ground in pain.</p>  
  
<p>“Ugh.”</p>  
  
<p>Unable to stand by, Joo-Hee rushed to Kang Tae-Shik.</p>  
  
<p>“I’ll heal you!”</p>  
  
<p>Joo-Hee had her own thoughts.</p>  
  
<p>Even if the enemy was somewhere nearby, she was a B-rank healer-type Hunter.</p>  
  
<p>Her healing speed was by no means slow.</p>  
  
<p>So, she judged it advantageous to heal Kang Tae-Shik before the enemy could attack.</p>  
  
<p>“Just hang in there.”</p>  
  
<p>Joo-Hee stood in front of Kang Tae-Shik and extended her hands.</p>  
  
<p>A faint light began to gather at her fingertips.</p>  
  
<p>At that moment, Kang Tae-Shik quickly raised his upper body and aimed his mana-infused fingertips at Joo-Hee’s throat.</p>  
  
<p>Swish!</p>  
  
<p>Just before his fingertips touched Joo-Hee’s throat, someone narrowly grabbed Kang Tae-Shik’s wrist.</p>  
  
<p>Thud!</p>  
  
<p>“Ah…!”</p>  
  
<p>Startled, Joo-Hee stumbled back and fell.</p>  
  
<p>Thud.</p>  
  
<p>Kang Tae-Shik looked puzzled.</p>  
  
<p>‘He blocked my attack at this distance?’</p>  
  
<p>It wasn’t difficult for a high-rank Hunter to take out a few low-rank Hunters.</p>  
  
<p>The only obstacle was the one B-rank female Hunter.</p>  
  
<p>Fortunately, she was a non-combat type.</p>  
  
<p>Since she couldn’t defend herself, he thought it would be easy to finish her off with a surprise attack.</p>  
  
<p>But… the surprise attack was blocked.</p>  
  
<p>All his acting had been for nothing.</p>  
  
<p>Kang Tae-Shik’s gaze followed the hand gripping his wrist.</p>  
  
<p>At the end of it was Jin-Woo’s face.</p>  
  
<p>Jin-Woo’s eyes were filled with a fierce killing intent.</p>  
  
<p>Kang Tae-Shik frowned.</p>  
  
<p>“A low-rank Hunter from the Association?!”</p>  
  
<p>Swish!</p>  
  
<p>Kang Tae-Shik’s other hand flew toward Jin-Woo’s face.</p>  
  
<p>But Jin-Woo tilted his head, easily dodging the punch.</p>  
  
<p>‘What?’</p>  
  
<p>Kang Tae-Shik forcefully shook off Jin-Woo’s grip.</p>  
  
<p>“Huh?”</p>  
  
<p>Jin-Woo also looked surprised.</p>  
  
<p>As expected of a high-rank Hunter, his strength was impressive.</p>  
  
<p>With both arms free, Kang Tae-Shik began to unleash a flurry of attacks.</p>  
  
<p>But Jin-Woo moved at a speed comparable to Kang Tae-Shik’s, countering each strike.</p>  
  
<p>Pah! Bam! Crack!</p>  
  
<p>The two exchanged countless blows, neither giving an inch.</p>  
  
<p>In the meantime, Song Chi-Yeol pulled Joo-Hee back.</p>  
  
<p>“Ah, Mr. Song…”</p>  
  
<p>Joo-Hee was too shocked to speak.</p>  
  
<p>But the person more shocked than Joo-Hee was Song Chi-Yeol himself.</p>  
  
<p>‘How is this possible…?’</p>  
  
<p>The speed of their exchange was unbelievable.</p>  
  
<p>It was hard to follow with the naked eye.</p>  
  
<p>It was understandable for a high-rank Hunter, but Sung Jin-Woo was nothing like the person he knew.</p>  
  
<p>He wasn’t losing to a B-rank at all.</p>  
  
<p>‘Even with my C-rank eyes, it’s hard to keep up with their movements!’</p>  
  
<p>His intuition had been right.</p>  
  
<p>The Jin-Woo before him was not the weak but perceptive E-rank young man he once knew.</p>  
  
<p>After exchanging hundreds of blows in the blink of an eye, the two stepped back to catch their breath.</p>  
  
<p>Jin-Woo glared at Kang Tae-Shik, his brow furrowed.</p>  
  
<p>“The blood on your clothes… it’s not yours, is it?”</p>  
  
<p>Kang Tae-Shik rubbed his wrist and replied.</p>  
  
<p>“Yeah, it’s those bastards’ blood. But I didn’t expect to meet a Hunter like you here.”</p>  
  
<p>He was genuinely impressed.</p>  
  
<p>He hadn’t heard of any high-rank Hunters among the Association’s low-rank Hunters.</p>  
  
<p>‘This is a loss.’</p>  
  
<p>He had thought today was the perfect timing to carry out his plan, but he had encountered an unexpected obstacle. Kang Tae-Shik couldn’t contain his curiosity and asked.</p>  
  
<p>“Who are you? What’s your rank?”</p>  
  
<p>Jin-Woo summoned ‘Kasaka’s Venom Fang’ into his hand and answered briefly.</p>  
  
<p>“Sung Jin-Woo. E-rank.”</p>  
  
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\*\*CHAPTER END\*\*