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\*\*CHAPTER START\*\*  
  
<h1>Solo Leveling - Chapter 32</h1>  
  
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<p>Chapter 32</p>  
<p>4. B-rank Kang Tae-Shik</p>  
<p>Kang Tae-Shik felt as if he had been hit in the back of the head.</p>  
<p>The guy who had just introduced himself as an E-rank Hunter had shown movements comparable to his own, someone who had never lost in speed even among B-rank Hunters.</p>  
<p>'Is this guy mocking me?'</p>  
<p>Kang Tae-Shik gritted his teeth.</p>  
<p>'Wait a minute...'</p>  
<p>But something felt off.</p>  
<p>'If he were really a high-rank Hunter, there's no reason for him to be here.'</p>  
<p>The work of lower-tier Hunters in the Association was predictable.</p>  
<p>Their main task was to handle Gates that Guilds or individuals had abandoned because they weren’t profitable.</p>  
<p>Compared to other Hunters, their income was meager, and they struggled to gain recognition among their peers.</p>  
<p>So, the guy was probably really an E-rank.</p>  
<p>But his abilities were far beyond that.</p>  
<p>'Still, it’s not like an Illegal Registrant would be working under the Association’s name.'</p>  
<p>Kang Tae-Shik eventually reached the only possible conclusion.</p>  
<p>'...A re-awakening after awakening.'</p>  
<p>Come to think of it, he remembered the Association’s upper management making a fuss not long ago about a suspected re-awakening case somewhere near here.</p>  
<p>'They definitely said he was an Association-affiliated Hunter...'</p>  
<p>It would have been good if he had remembered the name.</p>  
<p>Since it wasn’t that long ago, if the guy had delayed his re-registration, there was a possibility he was still maintaining his E-rank while helping the Association.</p>  
<p>Of all days, he had to run into him today.</p>  
<p>He had meticulously checked the list of Hunters participating in today’s raid but had overlooked this guy.</p>  
<p>'What terrible luck.'</p>  
<p>He couldn’t help but think that.</p>  
<p>'I’ll have to ask for additional payment then...'</p>  
<p>Kang Tae-Shik recalled a memory from a few days ago and licked his dry lips with the tip of his tongue.</p>  
<p>\*\*\*</p>  
<p>A few days ago.</p>  
<p>A café near the Association Headquarters.</p>  
<p>As soon as he sat down, Kang Tae-Shik asked, "Why did you ask to see me?"</p>  
<p>The middle-aged man sitting across from him looked strangely haggard.</p>  
<p>'Was he some unemployed CEO or something?'</p>  
<p>They were definitely meeting for the first time.</p>  
<p>But after receiving the man’s persistent calls one after another, Kang Tae-Shik had finally agreed to spare some time.</p>  
<p>The man opened his mouth as if talking to himself. "I’ve heard that anything can happen inside a Dungeon."</p>  
<p>The man’s voice was so soft that Kang Tae-Shik had to ask again. "What do you mean by that?"</p>  
<p>"Here’s all the money I’ve gathered."</p>  
<p>The man abruptly pulled out a bankbook.</p>  
<p>Kang Tae-Shik alternated his gaze between the man and the bankbook before checking the contents.</p>  
<p>Inside was a staggering 2 billion won.</p>  
<p>"Why are you giving this to me?"</p>  
<p>As Kang Tae-Shik made a puzzled expression, the man lowered his head and said, "Among the prisoners you’re overseeing, there’s a guy who assaulted my daughter. Because of that, my daughter hanged herself, and her mother is still in the hospital from the shock."</p>  
<p>The man continued, his voice trembling. "And that bastard will be walking the streets freely in a few years... How can I sleep at night?"</p>  
<p>When the man raised his head again, his face was filled with sorrow and anger. "I think you understand what I’m trying to say."</p>  
<p>The man bowed his head again. "Please, Hunter, I beg you!"</p>  
<p>Silence fell between the two.</p>  
<p>Kang Tae-Shik leaned back in his chair and sank into deep thought.</p>  
<p>After a long while, he finally spoke. "Do you know why I joined the Association’s Surveillance Division?"</p>  
<p>"Huh?"</p>  
<p>The man raised his head.</p>  
<p>Kang Tae-Shik continued his explanation. "At the B-rank level, Hunters are classified as high-rank and often receive offers from large Guilds. So why do you think I’m doing this low-paying job?"</p>  
<p>"I... I don’t know."</p>  
<p>Kang Tae-Shik raised the corner of his mouth. "Because I enjoy fighting people far more than monsters."</p>  
<p>In that sense, the Surveillance Division was practically his calling.</p>  
<p>It was a position where he could legally beat up Hunters.</p>  
<p>And occasionally, when unavoidable, even kill them.</p>  
<p>'Unavoidable... right.'</p>  
<p>Kang Tae-Shik swallowed a laugh and said, "Squashing the bug you mentioned is no big deal for me. But inside the Dungeon, there are other Hunters besides the bugs. To me, they’re bugs, but do you think they see themselves that way?"</p>  
<p>At Kang Tae-Shik’s negative tone, the man’s face fell.</p>  
<p>He had thought he could finally avenge his daughter.</p>  
<p>It felt like the sky was falling.</p>  
<p>But Kang Tae-Shik, as if mocking the man, gave a sinister smile and parted his lips. "If you can add another 1 billion to this for handling the other Hunters, is that possible?"</p>  
<p>\*\*\*</p>  
<p>But if those other Hunters included a re-awakened Hunter, then 3 billion wouldn’t be enough.</p>  
<p>After all, it was a matter of life and death.</p>  
<p>The self-proclaimed E-rank Hunter was still emitting a sharp gaze.</p>  
<p>He looked ready to pounce at any moment if he saw an opening.</p>  
<p>Kang Tae-Shik swallowed hard.</p>  
<p>'He’s not an easy opponent.'</p>  
<p>He was confident he could win.</p>  
<p>Even before becoming an Awakener, Kang Tae-Shik had rarely lost in one-on-one fights.</p>  
<p>But even if he won, it wouldn’t be an easy victory.</p>  
<p>At this point, he needed to slightly adjust his plan.</p>  
<p>Just then, the E-rank Hunter asked, "Why did you kill those prisoners?"</p>  
<p>"The father of the girl they assaulted came to me directly and begged me. Those bastards were beasts who deserved to die. I wasn’t killing humans; I was disposing of beasts who harmed people."</p>  
<p>The E-rank Hunter listened silently.</p>  
<p>Maybe they could reach an understanding.</p>  
<p>Kang Tae-Shik began to persuade him in earnest. "Things have turned out this way, but I don’t want to harm you. If you pretend today never happened, I won’t lay a hand on you again."</p>  
<p>Of course, he couldn’t leave a potential threat alive.</p>  
<p>So Kang Tae-Shik thought to himself.</p>  
<p>A direct confrontation could result in injury, so it’s better to get out of here first and deal with them one by one at a more opportune time.</p>  
<p>But the E-rank Hunter scoffed. "You should’ve said that before you tried to attack me. Now that your ambush failed, you want to pretend nothing happened?"</p>  
<p>He wasn’t wrong.</p>  
<p>Kang Tae-Shik also chuckled as if amused. 'So that’s how it’s going to be.'</p>  
<p>In that case, he had no choice but to go all out.</p>  
<p>Kang Tae-Shik’s gaze turned fierce.</p>  
<p>His sharp eyes quickly scanned the E-rank Hunter up and down.</p>  
<p>Kang Tae-Shik’s brow twitched slightly. 'Where did that dagger come from?'</p>  
<p>At some point, the E-rank Hunter was holding a dagger.</p>  
<p>'Well... does it matter?'</p>  
<p>It didn’t matter where the weapon came from.</p>  
<p>What mattered was what he was holding.</p>  
<p>Kang Tae-Shik finished his brief analysis.</p>  
<p>Fast movements and using a dagger as a weapon.</p>  
<p>The opponent was a close-range Dealer.</p>  
<p>His specialty was likely 'Assassination.'</p>  
<p>Coincidentally, it was the same as his own specialty.</p>  
<p>But the guy had only recently re-awakened.</p>  
<p>The difference in experience would be overwhelming.</p>  
<p>He probably couldn’t even utilize his skills properly.</p>  
<p>"As your senior, let me teach you a thing or two."</p>  
<p>Kang Tae-Shik pulled out a knife from his waist and sneered at the E-rank Hunter. "Can you do something like this?"</p>  
<p>Kang Tae-Shik used his 'Stealth' skill to disappear.</p>  
<p>The E-rank Hunter looked around in confusion.</p>  
<p>His bewilderment was palpable. 'Of course he would be.'</p>  
<p>The Stealth skill wasn’t just about becoming invisible.</p>  
<p>Appearance, sound, smell!</p>  
<p>It was a skill that made all traces of the user vanish in an instant!</p>  
<p>That was what Stealth was.</p>  
<p>Among Assassin-type Hunters, only a very few could use the Stealth skill.</p>  
<p>Regardless of rank, only those with extremely good luck could obtain the Stealth skill upon awakening.</p>  
<p>'Quick and decisive!'</p>  
<p>Kang Tae-Shik instantly moved behind the E-rank Hunter.</p>  
<p>The guy’s back was completely exposed.</p>  
<p>'This is the end.'</p>  
<p>He had expected a tough fight, but it turned out to be easier than he thought.</p>  
<p>If the opponent had been prepared for the Stealth skill, it wouldn’t have been this easy.</p>  
<p>As expected, the difference in experience decided the outcome.</p>  
<p>'Die!'</p>  
<p>Kang Tae-Shik’s knife sharply aimed for the E-rank Hunter’s ribs.</p>  
<p>But then!</p>  
<p>\*Clang!\*</p>  
<p>Two daggers collided, sending sparks flying.</p>  
<p>Kang Tae-Shik’s Stealth was broken, and his eyes widened. "What, how?"</p>  
<p>The E-rank Hunter’s dagger had precisely blocked his own.</p>  
<p>Kang Tae-Shik looked up at the E-rank Hunter’s face with a shocked expression.</p>  
<p>The E-rank Hunter spoke with an indifferent face. "It’s heating up now."</p>  
<p>"What... what are you talking about?"</p>  
<p>At the E-rank Hunter’s incomprehensible words, Kang Tae-Shik suddenly felt an inexplicable fear.</p>  
<p>\*\*\*</p>  
<p>\*Ding!\*</p>  
<p>[Emergency Quest: Defeat the Enemy!]</p>  
<p>Someone with killing intent toward the 'Player' is nearby. Defeat the enemy to ensure your safety. Failure to comply will result in penalties.</p>  
<p>Number of Enemies to Defeat: 1</p>  
<p>Number of Enemies Defeated: 0</p>  
<p>Jin-Woo checked the emergency quest message and let out a sigh of relief. 'It wasn’t for nothing.'</p>  
<p>He had wondered if letting Kang Tae-Shik take the initiative would prevent the emergency quest from appearing, like with Hwang Dong-Seok’s group last time.</p>  
<p>So he tested it, and as expected, it worked.</p>  
<p>The moment Kang Tae-Shik showed killing intent, the message appeared.</p>  
<p>It wasn’t just for show that he had engaged in conversation or acted flustered to reveal weaknesses.</p>  
<p>'I didn’t know he could use Stealth...'</p>  
<p>To be honest, he was a bit surprised when Kang Tae-Shik disappeared in front of him. Stealth was a very rare skill, after all.</p>  
<p>But as he focused, he could feel Kang Tae-Shik’s movements in such detail that he could almost sense them with his eyes closed.</p>  
<p>It was the power of his high Senses stat.</p>  
<p>Originally, he had invested in it to determine whether an enemy was worth fighting or not, but it had other uses too.</p>  
<p>'I got lucky.'</p>  
<p>Thanks to that, Kang Tae-Shik was now looking as if he had seen a ghost. "What, how?"</p>  
<p>Now, all he had to do was defeat him to receive the additional quest reward.</p>  
<p>'If I’m going to fight, I might as well get everything I can.'</p>  
<p>The turn had come.</p>  
<p>Now was the time to attack.</p>  
<p>The two daggers pressed against each other in a tense tug-of-war.</p>  
<p>Their strength was evenly matched.</p>  
<p>Suddenly, Jin-Woo’s eyes flashed. 'Should I try something else?'</p>  
<p>Jin-Woo’s foot moved quickly, stepping on Kang Tae-Shik’s instep.</p>  
<p>\*Crunch!\*</p>  
<p>"Argh!"</p>  
  
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