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33docx

33

\*\*CHAPTER START\*\*  
  
<h1>Solo Leveling - Chapter 33</h1>  
  
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<p>Kang Tae-Shik, who had been focusing all his attention on the dagger, was startled by the sudden pain rising from his toes and quickly stepped back.</p>  
  
<p>Jin-Woo didn’t miss the opportunity.</p>  
  
<p>‘Dash!’</p>  
  
<p>[Skill ‘Dash’ has been activated.]</p>  
  
<p>[Movement Speed increased by 30%. Mana decreases by 1 per minute during activation.]</p>  
  
<p>Jin-Woo quickly closed the distance.</p>  
  
<p>Kang Tae-Shik’s eyes widened.</p>  
  
<p>‘His speed increased even more?’</p>  
  
<p>Jin-Woo, who was already showing agile movements, became even faster, making it impossible for Kang Tae-Shik to keep up.</p>  
  
<p>In an instant, Jin-Woo closed the distance and struck Kang Tae-Shik’s thigh with ‘Kasaka’s Venom Fang’.</p>  
  
<p>“Gah!”</p>  
  
<p>It was an attack aimed at the gap in Kang Tae-Shik’s upper body defense.</p>  
  
<p>[Effect: ‘Paralysis’ has been activated.]</p>  
  
<p>[Target’s Resistance is high. Effect has been canceled.]</p>  
  
<p>[Effect: ‘Bleeding’ has been activated.]</p>  
  
<p>[Target’s Health decreases by 1% per second.]</p>  
  
<p>‘Good!’</p>  
  
<p>The additional attack effect of ‘Kasaka’s Venom Fang’ had taken effect.</p>  
  
<p>It was a shame that the paralysis didn’t work, but the fight had become much easier.</p>  
  
<p>However, Kang Tae-Shik was also a high-rank Hunter!</p>  
  
<p>His resistance was not to be underestimated.</p>  
  
<p>The knife in his hand flew toward Jin-Woo.</p>  
  
<p>Swish, swish.</p>  
  
<p>Jin-Woo narrowly avoided the knife and attacked Kang Tae-Shik’s vital points.</p>  
  
<p>Despite the discomfort in his leg from the wound on his thigh, Kang Tae-Shik calmly blocked Jin-Woo’s attacks like the seasoned Hunter he was.</p>  
  
<p>Clang, clang!</p>  
  
<p>Sweat dripped from the foreheads of both Jin-Woo and Kang Tae-Shik.</p>  
  
<p>‘Our speeds are equal!’</p>  
  
<p>‘We’re evenly matched in speed!’</p>  
  
<p>Both of them were amazed by each other’s agile movements as they continued their high-speed battle at close range.</p>  
  
<p>Countless attacks with lethal potential, any one of which could decide the outcome of the fight, were exchanged.</p>  
  
<p>Swish, swish, swish, swish, swish, swish, swish, swish!</p>  
  
<p>It was a fierce battle that would make anyone watching’s blood run cold.</p>  
  
<p>‘I need to break the balance.’</p>  
  
<p>Jin-Woo focused his eyes.</p>  
  
<p>[Skill: ‘Killing Intent’ has been activated.]</p>  
  
<p>Kang Tae-Shik, who met Jin-Woo’s gaze, flinched.</p>  
  
<p>‘What’s this?’</p>  
  
<p>[Effect: ‘Fear’ has been activated.]</p>  
  
<p>[All of the target’s stats are reduced by 50% for 1 minute.]</p>  
  
<p>‘Got it!’</p>  
  
<p>Jin-Woo was certain of victory.</p>  
  
<p>Meanwhile, Kang Tae-Shik’s pupils trembled.</p>  
  
<p>‘Why does my body feel so heavy?’</p>  
  
<p>After meeting Jin-Woo’s gaze, his body felt as if he were struggling in water.</p>  
  
<p>His once-proud speed began to decrease.</p>  
  
<p>Swish! Swish!</p>  
  
<p>Wounds began to appear one by one on Kang Tae-Shik’s body.</p>  
  
<p>‘T-This can’t be!’</p>  
  
<p>Kang Tae-Shik’s mind was in chaos.</p>  
  
<p>This was clearly a debuff effect.</p>  
  
<p>He had never heard of an Assassin Class being able to use debuff magic.</p>  
  
<p>‘Wasn’t assassination his specialty?’</p>  
  
<p>No, then what about this speed?</p>  
  
<p>However, Kang Tae-Shik soon had to stop thinking.</p>  
  
<p>His confusion turned to shock.</p>  
  
<p>Jin-Woo was charging deep into his space right before his eyes. Kang Tae-Shik hurriedly aimed for Jin-Woo’s eyes.</p>  
  
<p>Swish!</p>  
  
<p>Jin-Woo quickly pulled his neck back, but the knife slightly grazed his cheek. However, Jin-Woo had already prepared himself for this level of damage.</p>  
  
<p>He had to take some risks for the decisive blow.</p>  
  
<p>Kang Tae-Shik’s face twisted.</p>  
  
<p>‘Damn it.’</p>  
  
<p>Jin-Woo, who had entered Kang Tae-Shik’s personal space, stabbed ‘Kasaka’s Venom Fang’ into Kang Tae-Shik’s chest.</p>  
  
<p>Thud!</p>  
  
<p>“Gah!”</p>  
  
<p>Kang Tae-Shik’s eyes widened.</p>  
  
<p>At that moment, both of them knew.</p>  
  
<p>The fight had been decided.</p>  
  
<p>Bright red blood pooled in Kang Tae-Shik’s mouth.</p>  
  
<p>It was blood gushing up from his chest.</p>  
  
<p>Kang Tae-Shik smiled bitterly, blood in his mouth.</p>  
  
<p>Of all days, to meet a re-awakened Hunter in a D-ranked Dungeon.</p>  
  
<p>‘Talk about bad luck, really.’</p>  
  
<p>The knife in Kang Tae-Shik’s hand fell to the ground.</p>  
  
<p>Gasping for breath, Kang Tae-Shik tilted his head and whispered something into Jin-Woo’s ear.</p>  
  
<p>“...”</p>  
  
<p>Jin-Woo, who had been silently listening, pulled the dagger out of Kang Tae-Shik’s chest.</p>  
  
<p>Kang Tae-Shik collapsed to the ground like a piece of clothing slipping off a hanger.</p>  
  
<p>Thud.</p>  
  
<p>Ding!</p>  
  
<p>[‘Emergency Quest: Defeat the Enemy’ has been completed.]</p>  
  
<p>A message appeared, but Jin-Woo’s expression wasn’t good.</p>  
  
<p>Killing a person, not a monster, left a bitter aftertaste.</p>  
  
<p>Even if the other party had started the fight.</p>  
  
<p>[Completion reward has arrived.]</p>  
  
<p>[Would you like to check the reward?] (Y/N)</p>  
  
<p>At least there was a reward, or else it would have been a complete loss.</p>  
  
<p>Jin-Woo consoled himself and checked the reward.</p>  
  
<p>Ding!</p>  
  
<p>[The following rewards have been prepared.]</p>  
  
<p>Reward 1. Stat Points +5</p>  
  
<p>‘Huh?’</p>  
  
<p>Jin-Woo made a puzzled expression.</p>  
  
<p>The reward was significantly less than when he had defeated Hwang Dong-Seok’s gang.</p>  
  
<p>‘The difficulty was much higher here, though?’</p>  
  
<p>Was the number of enemies more important than their strength?</p>  
  
<p>Or was there another condition that needed to be met?</p>  
  
<p>Jin-Woo tilted his head in confusion.</p>  
  
<p>But then, something caught Jin-Woo’s eye as he looked down.</p>  
  
<p>A light the size of a coin was flickering from Kang Tae-Shik’s body.</p>  
  
<p>Jin-Woo’s eyes widened.</p>  
  
<p>‘Could it be...?’</p>  
  
<p>He couldn’t believe it, but the flickering light was similar to the light that came from items dropped by monsters.</p>  
  
<p>When he had seen this light on Magic Beasts, Essence Stones had appeared.</p>  
  
<p>But now, the light was coming from the dead Kang Tae-Shik.</p>  
  
<p>‘What is it?’</p>  
  
<p>Jin-Woo calmed his trembling heart and reached out toward the area near Kang Tae-Shik’s heart where the light was leaking.</p>  
  
<p>Ding!</p>  
  
<p>It wasn’t a mistake.</p>  
  
<p>[Rune Stone: Stealth] has been discovered. Would you like to acquire it?</p>  
  
<p>‘A Rune Stone? If it’s a Rune Stone...!’</p>  
  
<p>His heart began to race.</p>  
  
<p>The skill Kang Tae-Shik had used had turned into a Rune Stone and remained in his body.</p>  
  
<p>Stealth was a rare skill that only a handful of Hunters could use. If this truly meant a ‘Rune Stone’ in the literal sense...</p>  
  
<p>‘Acquire.’</p>  
  
<p>A small stone with runic script engraved on it appeared in his hand.</p>  
  
<p>[Rune Stone: Stealth]</p>  
  
<p>Breaking the Rune Stone will absorb the skill.</p>  
  
<p>Break the stone to absorb the skill.</p>  
  
<p>It was indeed a Rune Stone in the literal sense.</p>  
  
<p>Breaking it would allow him to use Stealth.</p>  
  
<p>He hadn’t heard any news of a Rune Stone that could teach the Stealth skill appearing yet.</p>  
  
<p>So the value of this Rune Stone was immeasurable.</p>  
  
<p>At that moment, two voices came from behind.</p>  
  
<p>“Mr. Sung, are you okay?”</p>  
  
<p>“Mr. Jin-Woo!”</p>  
  
<p>Jin-Woo hid the Rune Stone in his pocket and turned around.</p>  
  
<p>Song Chi-Yeol and Lee Joo-Hee were looking at him with disbelief in their eyes.</p>  
  
<p>After all, Jin-Woo, an E-rank Hunter who had been struggling in a D-ranked Dungeon just moments ago, had defeated Kang Tae-Shik, a B-rank Hunter.</p>  
  
<p>Even if Joo-Hee, a non-combat type, didn’t understand, Song Chi-Yeol, a C-rank Hunter, knew exactly how absurd this was.</p>  
  
<p>Jin-Woo looked over his body.</p>  
  
<p>“Yes, I’m fine.”</p>  
  
<p>At least on the surface, he seemed unharmed.</p>  
  
<p>There was no particular pain either.</p>  
  
<p>However, as he turned his head, the blood that had pooled on his chin dripped down. He absentmindedly touched his cheek and realized blood was flowing from the wound he had received earlier.</p>  
  
<p>“Ah.”</p>  
  
<p>“Let me heal you.”</p>  
  
<p>A faint blue light swirled at Joo-Hee’s fingertips, and even that small wound disappeared.</p>  
  
<p>An E-rank Hunter had defeated a B-rank Hunter alone without any major injuries.</p>  
  
<p>For the two people who knew Jin-Woo, the fact that he had defeated the B-rank Hunter was more shocking than the B-rank Hunter trying to kill them earlier.</p>  
  
<p>“How did you...”</p>  
  
<p>Song Chi-Yeol couldn’t continue his sentence.</p>  
  
<p>Jin-Woo also knew what Song Chi-Yeol and Joo-Hee wanted to say.</p>  
  
<p>So he spoke first.</p>  
  
<p>“I’m sorry. I’ll explain everything when the time comes, but for now, please don’t ask anything.”</p>  
  
<p>When Jin-Woo spoke in a serious tone, Joo-Hee nodded her head.</p>  
  
<p>Song Chi-Yeol also nodded soon after.</p>  
  
<p>“If you say so, there must be a reason. I understand.”</p>  
  
<p>Jin-Woo suddenly turned his head toward the direction of the Boss.</p>  
  
<p>Although things had gotten complicated, his plan to defeat the Boss hadn’t changed.</p>  
  
<p>He wanted to defeat the Boss alone if possible.</p>  
  
<p>There was also something he could only do if the two of them weren’t around.</p>  
  
<p>Jin-Woo looked at Song Chi-Yeol.</p>  
  
<p>“With something like this happening, it would be unreasonable to continue the raid. Please go out and contact the Association. I’ll stay here and look for any survivors.”</p>  
  
<p>Song Chi-Yeol intuitively understood what Jin-Woo was trying to do.</p>  
  
<p>‘He’s going to close the Gate.’</p>  
  
<p>In Song Chi-Yeol’s opinion, that seemed like the best way to avoid any further complications.</p>  
  
<p>“That sounds good. Miss Joo-Hee, let’s go.”</p>  
  
<p>At Song Chi-Yeol’s urging, Joo-Hee hesitated for a moment before running to Jin-Woo.</p>  
  
<p>“You didn’t forget our promise to have dinner together, right?”</p>  
  
<p>Jin-Woo smiled.</p>  
  
<p>“I didn’t forget. I still haven’t gotten my change back.”</p>  
  
<p>“Then keep your promise. I’ll wait outside.”</p>  
  
<p>When Jin-Woo nodded, Joo-Hee finally seemed relieved and stepped back.</p>  
  
<p>Even as they were leaving the Dungeon, Joo-Hee looked back several times. Jin-Woo let out a sigh as their figures disappeared.</p>  
  
<p>“Phew.”</p>  
  
<p>He had wanted to keep it hidden for as long as possible. But in the end, he had been found out.</p>  
  
<p>With two witnesses, there was no way to deny it now.</p>  
  
<p>‘But I don’t want to threaten Joo-Hee or Mr. Song either.’</p>  
  
<p>Defeating a B-rank Hunter would likely be considered self-defense.</p>  
  
<p>With two witnesses, that wouldn’t be a problem.</p>  
  
<p>The issue was how an E-rank Hunter had defeated a B-rank Hunter.</p>  
  
<p>‘Being a re-awakened Hunter would be the most convincing explanation.’</p>  
  
<p>He decided to go with that.</p>  
  
<p>He would reveal himself as a re-awakened Hunter and undergo a rank re-evaluation.</p>  
  
<p>No one would believe him if he talked about the System or leveling up, and there was no reason for him to reveal that on his own.</p>  
  
<p>Having decided to undergo the re-evaluation, he felt a mix of relief and regret.</p>  
  
<p>‘I wanted to get stronger before receiving my rank...’</p>  
  
<p>But when did things ever go according to plan in this world?</p>  
  
<p>It was an unavoidable situation.</p>  
  
<p>‘How much will my rank increase?’</p>  
  
<p>Since he had fought on par with Kang Tae-Shik and won, would it be slightly higher than B-rank?</p>  
  
<p>He had been quite confident in his strength, but the high-rank Hunters from B to S were indeed strong.</p>  
  
<p>‘Well, I’ll think about the future later.’</p>  
  
<p>Now it was time to defeat the Boss.</p>  
  
<p>In a Dungeon emitting D-rank level Mana Waves, only E-rank Magic Beasts like Goblins had appeared.</p>  
  
<p>That meant the rest of the Mana Waves were likely coming from the Boss.</p>  
  
<p>A Boss of that level would provide enough Experience Points for a level-up.</p>  
  
<p>‘But before that.’</p>  
  
<p>There was something he needed to check.</p>  
  
<p>Jin-Woo maximized his senses and thoroughly scanned the Dungeon’s energy.</p>  
  
<p>“Found it.”</p>  
  
<p>Jin-Woo moved his steps.</p>  
  
<p>On the way, he found the bodies of Kim Sang-Shik and other Hunters.</p>  
  
<p>That was the power of a high-rank Hunter.</p>  
  
<p>If a high-rank Hunter wanted to, they could easily take the lives of a few low-rank Hunters in the blink of an eye.</p>  
  
<p>Jin-Woo passed by them with a stiff expression.</p>  
  
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\*\*CHAPTER END\*\*