# 7docx

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\*\*CHAPTER START\*\*  
  
<h1>Solo Leveling - Chapter 7</h1>  
  
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<p>Chapter 7</p>  
  
<p>Front, back, left, right.</p>  
<p>To secure a full view of all directions, at least four people were needed.</p>  
<p>Himself, Joo-Hee, Mr. Song, and Mr. Kim.</p>  
<p>If even one of the remaining four were to leave, a blind spot would inevitably form.</p>  
<p>Mr. Kim wiped the sweat from his forehead and asked,</p>  
<p>“Mr. Sung, what’s going on? Can you explain a bit?”</p>  
<p>“We just need to hold out! Until the blue flames are completely extinguished.”</p>  
<p>Jin-Woo shared everything he had learned.</p>  
<p>Mr. Kim nodded, his ears perking up.</p>  
<p>After quickly finishing his explanation, Jin-Woo added one final remark.</p>  
<p>“We can all survive.”</p>  
<p>The Commandments of this room always left a path for survival.</p>  
<p>The final Commandment would be no different.</p>  
<p>Jin-Woo was certain that if they just trusted each other, no one would get hurt and they could all return alive.</p>  
<p>“...”</p>  
<p>But Mr. Kim thought differently.</p>  
<p>Hesitating, Mr. Kim asked,</p>  
<p>“Hey, Mr. Sung... You might be right, but... isn’t it possible that as time passes, the door could completely close?”</p>  
<p>“...”</p>  
<p>Jin-Woo couldn’t answer.</p>  
<p>It was a conclusion he had reached after much deliberation, but until the result was clear, he couldn’t guarantee it 100%.</p>  
<p>But Mr. Kim needed an answer.</p>  
<p>He was more desperate for his own survival than the uncertain survival of everyone else.</p>  
<p>“I’m sorry... I can’t do this anymore.”</p>  
<p>“Mr. Kim!”</p>  
<p>“I’m sorry.”</p>  
<p>With those words, Mr. Kim descended from the altar.</p>  
<p>Ignoring Jin-Woo’s voice, he ran toward the door.</p>  
<p>Mr. Kim glanced back briefly outside the door but never returned.</p>  
<p>\*Thud.\*</p>  
<p>Jin-Woo gritted his teeth.</p>  
<p>“Damn it!”</p>  
<p>He had saved the lives of others, but what he received in return was neither kindness nor gratitude.</p>  
<p>A shiver of betrayal ran down his spine.</p>  
<p>As expected, as soon as Mr. Kim left, a hole formed in their surveillance.</p>  
<p>It was too much for three people to watch all directions.</p>  
<p>The stone statues, hidden from view, began to move stealthily.</p>  
<p>\*Creak—\*</p>  
<p>\*Creak—\*</p>  
<p>The statues were gradually closing in.</p>  
<p>Mr. Song, who had been looking around, spoke to Jin-Woo and Joo-Hee.</p>  
<p>“You two should go.”</p>  
<p>His voice sounded resigned.</p>  
<p>Jin-Woo turned to look at him.</p>  
<p>“Mr. Song...?”</p>  
<p>“Wasn’t it me who brought you here, just like Mr. Kim said? If someone has to stay behind, it should be me.”</p>  
<p>“But still!”</p>  
<p>“You two, who have more life ahead of you, should be the ones to leave.”</p>  
<p>Mr. Song smiled.</p>  
<p>It was a considerate gesture to ease the minds of the two who had to leave him behind.</p>  
<p>“...”</p>  
<p>Jin-Woo had no choice but to nod.</p>  
<p>Though it was uncomfortable, there was no time to argue over who would stay.</p>  
<p>Mr. Song tried to entrust Joo-Hee with helping Jin-Woo.</p>  
<p>“Miss Joo-Hee, can you help Mr. Sung?”</p>  
<p>“Yes, yes.”</p>  
<p>But as Joo-Hee tried to help Jin-Woo, she suddenly collapsed in place.</p>  
<p>“Ah...”</p>  
<p>Joo-Hee struggled to get up, tears welling in her eyes.</p>  
<p>“My legs... My legs won’t move.”</p>  
<p>Jin-Woo and Mr. Song’s faces hardened.</p>  
<p>Joo-Hee’s condition was clearly not good.</p>  
<p>Her lips had turned pale, and her entire body was trembling slightly.</p>  
<p>It was a side effect of overusing her mana while her body and mind were exhausted.</p>  
<p>‘She was trying to heal my leg...’</p>  
<p>Jin-Woo’s chest tightened, and he was at a loss for words.</p>  
<p>But there was no time to dwell on it.</p>  
<p>\*Creak—\*</p>  
<p>The statues were relentlessly approaching the altar.</p>  
<p>Jin-Woo shook off Mr. Song’s support and collapsed to the ground.</p>  
<p>Mr. Song’s eyes widened.</p>  
<p>“You...?”</p>  
<p>Jin-Woo spoke with a determined expression.</p>  
<p>“Mr. Song, please take Joo-Hee and leave.”</p>  
<p>“I said I’d stay behind.”</p>  
<p>“Then who will support Joo-Hee?”</p>  
<p>It was nearly impossible to carry Joo-Hee to the door in time, especially with his own body barely able to stand.</p>  
<p>‘Of course...’</p>  
<p>There was also the option of leaving Joo-Hee behind.</p>  
<p>But Joo-Hee had saved his life several times, and she was in this state because she had poured all her energy into helping him.</p>  
<p>He didn’t want to abandon such a person and live the rest of his life burdened by guilt.</p>  
<p>“There’s no time, go.”</p>  
<p>“...”</p>  
<p>Mr. Song, with a stern face, helped Joo-Hee up.</p>  
<p>But Joo-Hee, tears streaming down her face, shook her head.</p>  
<p>“No... Jin-Woo can still leave. I’d rather...”</p>  
<p>“I promised to treat you to dinner, right?”</p>  
<p>Jin-Woo took out the E-rank Essence Stone he had kept in his pocket and placed it in Joo-Hee’s hand.</p>  
<p>“Use this to eat first. Once we get out of here, I’ll go get the change.”</p>  
<p>As Jin-Woo smiled, Joo-Hee got angry.</p>  
<p>“You’re joking in this situation, Jin-Woo!”</p>  
<p>Jin-Woo nodded toward Mr. Song.</p>  
<p>Mr. Song lightly struck the back of Joo-Hee’s neck with his hand.</p>  
<p>“Ah.”</p>  
<p>Joo-Hee lost consciousness.</p>  
<p>Mr. Song slung the unconscious Joo-Hee over his shoulder.</p>  
<p>“...I’m sorry.”</p>  
<p>“It’s my choice, so don’t worry about it.”</p>  
<p>Mr. Song bowed his head to Jin-Woo.</p>  
<p>After the final farewell, Mr. Song quickly left the altar.</p>  
<p>\*Creak—\*</p>  
<p>\*Creak—\*</p>  
<p>While they were talking, the statues had already come close.</p>  
<p>Jin-Woo, kneeling, took a deep breath.</p>  
<p>“Hoo, hoo-.”</p>  
<p>The sword Mr. Kim had left behind caught his eye.</p>  
<p>Jin-Woo reached out and picked up the sword.</p>  
<p>‘If it’s come to this, I’ll take at least one of them down.’</p>  
<p>Looking back, Mr. Song and Joo-Hee had safely made it through the door. That was a relief.</p>  
<p>‘If it’s just me dying...’</p>  
<p>It wasn’t some grand act of sacrifice.</p>  
<p>There was some calculation behind it.</p>  
<p>Even if he returned, he would have to live the rest of his life without one leg.</p>  
<p>Of course, being a Hunter would be impossible, and even a normal life would be questionable.</p>  
<p>With only a high school diploma and no skills, his future would be bleak.</p>  
<p>‘My mother’s hospital bills, my sibling’s tuition...’</p>  
<p>He thought it would be better to leave his family with at least a bit more compensation.</p>  
<p>‘The compensation for dying during a raid is around 300 or 400 million, right?’</p>  
<p>It was an excessive amount for the life of an E-rank Hunter.</p>  
<p>\*Creak—\*</p>  
<p>\*Creak—\*</p>  
<p>\*Clang.\*</p>  
<p>Finally, they had arrived.</p>  
<p>The first statue to reach the altar stepped inside. Jin-Woo stared at it and raised his sword straight.</p>  
<p>“Come at me.”</p>  
<p>But the attack came from behind.</p>  
<p>\*Thud!\*</p>  
<p>A long spear pierced through Jin-Woo’s back and came out through his chest.</p>  
<p>“Guh!”</p>  
<p>Jin-Woo coughed up a mouthful of blood.</p>  
<p>A wave of pain surged through him.</p>  
<p>“If it had been just a bit higher, it would have pierced your heart!”</p>  
<p>The scolding he had received from Joo-Hee just a few hours ago flashed through his mind like a slideshow.</p>  
<p>“Ugh, aaaah!”</p>  
<p>The statue raised the spear.</p>  
<p>Jin-Woo, still impaled, was lifted into the air.</p>  
<p>After struggling in pain for a moment, the statue slammed Jin-Woo to the ground.</p>  
<p>\*Crash!\*</p>  
<p>“Guh!”</p>  
<p>The sound of bones breaking echoed throughout his body.</p>  
<p>His entire body curled up in pain.</p>  
<p>“Ugh... ugh...”</p>  
<p>The statues began to gather around Jin-Woo, who was trembling violently.</p>  
<p>They surrounded him in a circle.</p>  
<p>Jin-Woo looked up at them and shuddered.</p>  
<p>‘I don’t want to die like this...’</p>  
<p>As the moment of death approached, tears welled up in his eyes. The faces of his family flashed before him.</p>  
<p>Joo-Hee’s face, who had worried about him until the end, also appeared.</p>  
<p>‘I don’t want to die...’</p>  
<p>He didn’t want to end his short life of 24 years like this.</p>  
<p>\*Step.\*</p>  
<p>A statue holding a sword approached with an emotionless face.</p>  
<p>It raised its sword high.</p>  
<p>Jin-Woo, trembling, kept his eyes on the statue until the very end.</p>  
<p>Finally, the sword came down vertically.</p>  
<p>\*Swoosh—!\*</p>  
<p>‘Just one more chance, just one more chance!’</p>  
<p>Jin-Woo’s eyes widened.</p>  
<p>That’s when it happened.</p>  
<p>\*Tzzt—!\*</p>  
<p>As if someone had pressed the pause button on a video, the terrifyingly fast sword suddenly stopped.</p>  
<p>No, it wasn’t stopped.</p>  
<p>It had slowed down to the point where it seemed like it had stopped.</p>  
<p>1 millimeter per minute?</p>  
<p>Slowly but surely, the sword was descending.</p>  
<p>‘What, what’s going on?’</p>  
<p>Jin-Woo couldn’t hide his confusion.</p>  
<p>Then, a woman’s voice, one he had never heard before, echoed in his mind.</p>  
<p>[‘Secret Quest: The Courage of the Weak’ completion conditions have been fully met.]</p>  
<p>Secret Quest?</p>  
<p>Completion conditions met?</p>  
<p>He couldn’t understand what it meant.</p>  
<p>‘Wait, where is this voice coming from?’</p>  
<p>But the voice continued, regardless of Jin-Woo’s will.</p>  
<p>[You have qualified to become a Player. Will you accept?]</p>  
<p>Qualified?</p>  
<p>Accept?</p>  
<p>‘It sounds like they’re offering me something...’</p>  
<p>Having grown up poor, he had never turned down anything offered for free.</p>  
<p>But that was when he was alive. What use was it now that he was about to die?</p>  
<p>‘...’</p>  
<p>As Jin-Woo hesitated, the voice in his head urged him again.</p>  
<p>[The time granted to you is running out. If you refuse, your heart will stop in 0.02 seconds. Will you accept?]</p>  
<p>Whether it was a hallucination or not, he absolutely agreed with the fact that he was about to die.</p>  
<p>Besides the sword coming down on his head, countless other weapons were flying toward him.</p>  
<p>At this point, he just thought, ‘Let it be.’</p>  
<p>‘...If you’re giving it, then give it.’</p>  
<p>There was no need to say it out loud.</p>  
<p>He just thought it in his mind.</p>  
<p>Yet, the voice in his head responded immediately.</p>  
<p>[Welcome, Player.]</p>  
<p>\*Flash—\*</p>  
<p>A blinding light enveloped his entire body, and Jin-Woo lost consciousness.</p>  
  
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<p>6. Penalty</p>  
  
<p>He opened his eyes.</p>  
<p>A white ceiling and the smell of disinfectant stinging his nose.</p>  
<p>The feeling of a hard bed against his back.</p>  
<p>Jin-Woo immediately knew where he had woken up.</p>  
<p>‘A hospital?’</p>  
<p>Since meeting Joo-Hee, a B-rank Healer Hunter, the frequency of his visits had decreased, but the hospital was still a familiar place to Jin-Woo, like a convenience store he’d stop by on his way home.</p>  
<p>So much so that there were rumors of a “Sung Jin-Woo reserved seat” at the Hunter-designated hospital.</p>  
<p>Jin-Woo sat up.</p>  
<p>He placed his hand on his chest and quietly felt his heartbeat.</p>  
<p>His heart was beating just fine.</p>  
<p>‘I’m alive?’</p>  
<p>But that wasn’t all.</p>  
<p>Unlike usual, his body felt incredibly light.</p>  
<p>Normally, when he woke up in a hospital, his mind would be foggy, and it would be hard to move his body.</p>  
<p>But this time was different.</p>  
<p>It felt like he had just woken up after a good night’s sleep at home.</p>  
<p>‘What’s going on...?’</p>  
<p>Given the situation before he lost consciousness, this shouldn’t have been possible.</p>  
<p>A sword had been coming down right in front of him.</p>  
<p>Even if the sword had missed by luck, he had been surrounded by terrifying enemies.</p>  
<p>Even an attack party made up of A-rank, no, S-rank Hunters would have struggled against them.</p>  
<p>‘I survived that?’</p>  
<p>Was it all a dream?</p>  
<p>Fortunately, there was a good way to check.</p>  
<p>Jin-Woo pulled back the blanket covering him.</p>  
<p>If it was real, his leg would be missing. If it was a dream, his leg would be...</p>  
<p>“Are you awake?”</p>  
  
\*\*CHAPTER END\*\*