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\*\*CHAPTER START\*\*  
<h1>Solo Leveling - Chapter 8</h1>  
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<p>Chapter 8</p>  
<p>Startled by the deep voice coming from the corner, Jin-Woo turned his head sharply to look.</p>  
<p>“I’m sorry if I startled you.”</p>  
<p>“We couldn’t afford to delay any longer.”</p>  
<p>Two men in black suits approached the bed.</p>  
<p>Jin-Woo tilted his head slightly and asked, “Who... are you?”</p>  
<p>He didn’t recognize their faces at all.</p>  
<p>One of the men, who had a military-style short haircut, handed him a business card.</p>  
<p>“This is what we do.”</p>  
<p>Jin-Woo took the card and read it.</p>  
<p>‘Woo Jin-Chul, Section Chief of the Surveillance Division of the Korean Hunters Association?’</p>  
<p>The Surveillance Division was the only department within the Hunters Association that had a significant number of strong Hunters.</p>  
<p>Since it was the agency responsible for overseeing Hunters, it was only natural that it would have a lot of high-level Hunters.</p>  
<p>“Why is the Surveillance Division looking for me?”</p>  
<p>Woo Jin-Chul pulled a chair closer and sat down. The man who seemed to be his subordinate stood behind him.</p>  
<p>The physical presence of the two large men right next to him was overwhelming.</p>  
<p>What they told him was shocking.</p>  
<p>“I’ve been asleep for three days?”</p>  
<p>“Do you remember what happened before you lost consciousness?”</p>  
<p>“Yes.”</p>  
<p>“Please tell us everything you remember.”</p>  
<p>Jin-Woo recounted everything truthfully, leaving out only the inexplicable voices he had heard before losing consciousness.</p>  
<p>“And then you lost consciousness... is that it?”</p>  
<p>“Yes, when I opened my eyes, I was here.”</p>  
<p>Woo Jin-Chul and his subordinate exchanged glances.</p>  
<p>Since Jin-Woo himself didn’t know anything, they seemed to be at a loss.</p>  
<p>In fact, Jin-Woo was the one who wanted to know the most about what had happened.</p>  
<p>“How did I end up here? Did a big guild take care of them?”</p>  
<p>“Well, actually...”</p>  
<p>Woo Jin-Chul hesitated before finally speaking. “When the ‘White Tiger’ guild arrived at the scene after receiving reports from survivors, along with Surveillance Division personnel...”</p>  
<p>The White Tiger guild was one of the top five largest guilds in South Korea.</p>  
<p>The fact that the White Tiger guild had been called in meant that the Association had recognized the danger.</p>  
<p>What exactly had happened there?</p>  
<p>Jin-Woo swallowed dryly. “Already...?”</p>  
<p>“Everything was gone. In that room, only Hunter Sung Jin-Woo was lying unconscious. There were no traces of the statues or any other remains.”</p>  
<p>“What?” Jin-Woo’s face showed disbelief.</p>  
<p>“We can’t believe it either. If there had been any inconsistencies in the survivors’ statements or if parts of the victims’ bodies had been left at the scene, we might have considered other possibilities.”</p>  
<p>Woo Jin-Chul scratched his chin. With six years of experience in the Surveillance Division after receiving an A-rank, he was confident he had seen it all.</p>  
<p>But this was a first for him.</p>  
<p>They had even consulted other guilds and foreign agencies, but there were no significant leads.</p>  
<p>So...</p>  
<p>“Our theory is...” Woo Jin-Chul spoke cautiously. “There were definitely powerful entities there. And they were dealt with by someone, or something. No otherworldly beings escaped from that gate before it closed.”</p>  
<p>They had to consider all possibilities, no matter how slim.</p>  
<p>The Association had deliberated extensively, and this was the conclusion they had reached.</p>  
<p>Woo Jin-Chul watched Jin-Woo’s reaction as he continued. “We suspect... that Hunter Sung Jin-Woo may have undergone a second awakening.”</p>  
<p>A second awakening!</p>  
<p>Jin-Woo’s eyes widened.</p>  
<p>It was extremely rare, but there were cases where a Hunter who had already awakened underwent a second awakening.</p>  
<p>Often referred to as a ‘re-awakening,’ this process usually resulted in the Hunter becoming significantly stronger than before.</p>  
<p>Once a Hunter’s rank was determined, it rarely changed.</p>  
<p>A Hunter’s abilities were all determined at the time of their initial awakening.</p>  
<p>But re-awakened Hunters were different.</p>  
<p>They could surpass their limits, with C-rank Hunters becoming A-rank, and B-rank Hunters becoming S-rank.</p>  
<p>Woo Jin-Chul swallowed hard. ‘If Sung Jin-Woo has re-awakened and become an S-rank, or even higher, it’s not impossible for him to have dealt with those monsters alone.’</p>  
<p>Especially since the giant statue had melted C-rank Hunters with just a glance.</p>  
<p>What kind of power would someone need to kill such a monster while unconscious?</p>  
<p>To prepare for any possibility, they had classified this incident as top secret and thoroughly silenced all involved parties.</p>  
<p>Providing Jin-Woo with a private hospital room and the best medical team was also part of that.</p>  
<p>Woo Jin-Chul’s heart pounded. ‘Perhaps South Korea could have a Hunter of National-level...’</p>  
<p>In the world, there were fewer than ten Hunters considered to be of National-level.</p>  
<p>Each of them was said to surpass nuclear power.</p>  
<p>If South Korea could have one of those Hunters!</p>  
<p>Fortunately, confirming a re-awakening wasn’t difficult.</p>  
<p>As the saying goes, strike while the iron is hot.</p>  
<p>Woo Jin-Chul instructed his subordinate. “Bring it.”</p>  
<p>The subordinate rummaged through a bag in the corner and pulled something out.</p>  
<p>“That’s...”</p>  
<p>Before Jin-Woo could ask, Woo Jin-Chul explained. “It’s a Mana Measuring Device.”</p>  
<p>He added that while this device was compact, its performance was no less than the official Mana Measuring Devices at the Association.</p>  
<p>“Just place your hand on this Essence Stone for a moment.”</p>  
<p>On the disc was a Essence Stone the size of a fist.</p>  
<p>A black Essence Stone that seemed to suck you in like a black hole!</p>  
<p>It was a top-tier Essence Stone that only appeared from A-rank or higher magical beasts, each worth billions.</p>  
<p>As Jin-Woo silently looked at the Essence Stone, Woo Jin-Chul continued with a serious expression. “This is a necessary procedure for the investigation of this incident. Please cooperate.”</p>  
<p>Jin-Woo nodded.</p>  
<p>If this was the re-awakening he had dreamed of, his life would change completely.</p>  
<p>Why would he refuse a free check?</p>  
<p>Jin-Woo placed his hand on the Essence Stone, and soon a faint light began to emanate from it.</p>  
<p>Sweat formed on the foreheads of Woo Jin-Chul and his subordinate.</p>  
<p>\*Whoosh—\*</p>  
<p>The light surrounding the Essence Stone soon disappeared.</p>  
<p>Woo Jin-Chul quickly removed his sunglasses and checked the readings.</p>  
<p>His pupils trembled as if an earthquake had struck.</p>  
<p>“This can’t be!”</p>  
<p>No matter how many times he looked, the numbers didn’t change.</p>  
<p>‘How...’</p>  
<p>How could a person holding a Hunter license have a mana level of only 10?</p>  
<p>Considering that the average mana level of the lowest rank, E-rank Hunters, was between 70 and 100, Sung Jin-Woo was almost no different from an ordinary person.</p>  
<p>“Is it a re-awakening? If so, what rank would it be?”</p>  
<p>Jin-Woo clenched his sweaty hands.</p>  
<p>The reactions of the two Surveillance Division employees suggested that the results were anything but normal.</p>  
<p>Woo Jin-Chul compared Jin-Woo’s previous data with the current readings and nodded.</p>  
<p>‘The first measurement was 12. Four years later, it’s 10. Although it decreased by 2, it’s within the margin of error.’</p>  
<p>There was nothing wrong with the Mana Measuring Device.</p>  
<p>Sung Jin-Woo’s mana level was simply too low to make any sense.</p>  
<p>It was a miracle he had survived this long.</p>  
<p>Deciding that this was a waste of time, Woo Jin-Chul stood up. “Let’s go.”</p>  
<p>“Yes.”</p>  
<p>Woo Jin-Chul and his subordinate quickly gathered their things.</p>  
<p>“Wait, can you at least tell me something...”</p>  
<p>As Jin-Woo spoke, Woo Jin-Chul bowed his head. “Thank you for your cooperation. If you remember anything else, please contact us.”</p>  
<p>The two men left the room as quickly as they had come, leaving the once crowded room eerily quiet.</p>  
<p>“...”</p>  
<p>Jin-Woo scratched the back of his neck. ‘Was it all just a false hope?’</p>  
<p>Thinking about it, aside from feeling refreshed, there wasn’t anything particularly different.</p>  
<p>And even if he had re-awakened, it would have been impossible for him to take on all those monsters alone.</p>  
<p>‘Would someone like the Final Weapon, known as the Ultimate Hunter, or Go Gun-Hee, the S-rank above S-rank, be able to face them?’</p>  
<p>Since he had never actually seen them fight, it was a meaningless assumption.</p>  
<p>Information about S-rank Hunters was shrouded in mystery.</p>  
<p>They were like clouds in the sky.</p>  
<p>Just as he was thinking that, he looked up.</p>  
<p>‘Huh?’</p>  
<p>When he glanced up, he saw words floating in the air.</p>  
<p>[You have unread messages.]</p>  
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<p>‘...?’</p>  
<p>He closed and opened his eyes again.</p>  
<p>[You have unread messages.]</p>  
<p>The words remained unchanged, floating in the air.</p>  
<p>He shook his head vigorously and rubbed his eyes, but nothing changed.</p>  
<p>Jin-Woo held his throbbing forehead with one hand and let his head drop. ‘First the voices, and now hallucinations...’</p>  
<p>Had something really happened to his head?</p>  
<p>There was something called Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD).</p>  
<p>It referred to abnormal symptoms shown by people who had experienced major accidents or traumatic events.</p>  
<p>Having recently lost most of his comrades and nearly died himself, it wouldn’t be strange for him to hear voices or see things.</p>  
<p>‘But...’</p>  
<p>There were a few things that didn’t quite add up.</p>  
<p>Jin-Woo’s gaze shifted to his leg.</p>  
<p>The leg that had been severed by the statue’s shield was now perfectly intact.</p>  
<p>The double dungeon, the underground shrine, the sudden voice, the completely healed leg, and now the message in front of his eyes.</p>  
<p>Too many things had happened at once.</p>  
<p>‘Maybe...’</p>  
<p>These events weren’t separate incidents but might be connected in some way.</p>  
<p>As his thoughts reached that point, the throbbing in his head seemed to ease slightly.</p>  
<p>‘Alright.’</p>  
<p>Jin-Woo raised his head.</p>  
<p>As his agitation subsided and his mind calmed, he suddenly became curious about the content of the message.</p>  
<p>There might be clues within the message that could solve some of his questions.</p>  
<p>Jin-Woo reached out toward the message to check it.</p>  
<p>His hand passed through the letters.</p>  
<p>‘Not touch-based?’</p>  
<p>He had become too accustomed to smartphones.</p>  
<p>No other method came to mind.</p>  
<p>As he pondered how to check the message, a memory from before he lost consciousness surfaced.</p>  
<p>“That’s right.”</p>  
<p>At that time, all communication with the mysterious voice had been through conversation.</p>  
<p>‘Maybe if I think the words in my head or say them out loud, like back then?’</p>  
<p>Having concluded that, Jin-Woo began reciting plausible commands one after another.</p>  
<p>“Check.”</p>  
<p>“Message.”</p>  
<p>“Check message.”</p>  
<p>“View message.”</p>  
<p>“Show.”</p>  
<p>“Show me.”</p>  
<p>“Let’s see.”</p>  
<p>“Show it to me!”</p>  
<p>Just then.</p>  
<p>“...What exactly do you want to see so badly?”</p>  
<p>Feeling a sharp gaze, Jin-Woo turned his head to see his younger sister in her school uniform peeking through the slightly open door of the hospital room.</p>  
<p>“Uh...”</p>  
<p>Jin-Woo was at a loss for words.</p>  
<p>An older brother staring at the ceiling, begging someone to show him something.</p>  
<p>There was no way to explain this.</p>  
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\*\*CHAPTER END\*\*