

Solo Leveling: Ragnarok [FAN TL] Chapter 141 - Chapter 140

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[My liege.] The moment Suho stepped into Jisan Prison, Beru sent a warning.

"Yeah." Suho nodded and focused his gaze forward. He could sense the presence of people throughout the prison.

'The criminal always returns to the scene of the crime, was that it?'

But that wasn't the case.

"Looks like we have competition."

"Is that a Summoner?"

The bounty hunters who had arrived at the prison before Suho frowned as soon as they saw him. More precisely, it was because of the small wolf sniffing around in front of Suho.

"Is that a summoned beast specialized in tracking?"

"Tsk. Another annoying competitor."

Seeing their wary gazes, Suho realized once again that the bounty hunter world was a fiercely competitive society. However, some didn't just see him as a competitor but approached him first with goodwill.

"Hey, are you a part of a team?"

"It doesn't seem like a combat summoned beast. Would you care to join our team?"

"No. Team up with us..."

In dungeon raids, where abilities unrelated to combat were meaningless, Summoners were an unpopular class. However, the situation was completely different when hunting villains. Especially in this case, Summoners with heightened senses of smell or tracking abilities were highly sought after.

[My liege's popularity is soaring!]

Whenever Suho flatly refused their offers, they would reluctantly back off.

"Hmm. It's dangerous for a Summoner to face a villain alone."

"He's probably young and naive. Well, some people only learn from their own mistakes"

"Looks like a newbie. Don't come begging for help later, got it?"

Countless condescending pieces of advice followed, but Suho ignored them. Despite that, some still handed him their business cards as they left, seemingly unwilling to give up completely.

"If you change your mind, give me a call. We'll probably run into each other often anyway."

'...Baek Miho was right.' Suho recalled Baek Miho's words about the shortage of manpower.

"There are definitely not enough bounty hunters for the scale of this incident."

[Not everyone will be here. It's been two days since the incident, so many have probably already checked this place and moved on.] Beru's words made Suho nod in agreement.

Just as Suho had come here first to investigate, most bounty hunters would have started their search here. By examining the traces of battle left behind, they could gauge the approximate level of the villains.

"Hmm. Looks like there were some pretty strong ones mixed in."

"Should we just back off this time? It might be better to go back to dungeon raiding."

"Let's do that."

Some hunters, realizing that this villain hunt wouldn't be easy, turned back without hesitation. This was a stark contrast to the White Tiger Guild, who had eagerly taken on this task to ensure the safety of the citizens.

[Actually, the White Tiger Guild is an exception. Most hunters wouldn't risk their lives for something that doesn't pay well.] Que whispered to Suho as they watched the hunters leave the prison one by one.

[The reason the White Tiger Guild is this way, is probably because their Guildmaster was a firefighter before awakening.]

"A firefighter?"

It was revealed that S-rank Hunter Baek Yoonho's previous occupation involved risking his life to rescue citizens. Suho expressed interest in this new revelation, while Que's

eyes lit up. Que, the former vice president of a large guild , coldly assessed the White Tiger Guild.

[The White Tiger Guildmaster will eventually stop engaging in unprofitable activities. After all, you need money to maintain a guild, especially a large one.]

"That's not something the vice president involved in embezzlement should say."

[Ahem.]

Taking offense, Que quietly disappeared into the shadows.

Suho chuckled at the sight and thought to himself. 'It's interesting that the White Tiger Guildmaster was a firefighter. My grandfather was also one.' It was a truly amusing coincidence.

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The fleeting thought of 'Maybe they knew each other?' crossed his mind, but he quickly dismissed it and focused on his investigation.

And he was able to confirm one thing. "I'm certain. There's no sign of any electronic anklets being removed anywhere."

[Yes. There are no traces of explosions either.] Beru agreed.

The interior of the prison, stained with blood from the battle, bore the scars of countless skills unleashed. But nowhere were there any signs of removed anklets or explosions, which meant.... "They must have had some special method to disable the anklets..."

They used magic without removing the anklets. That was the only conclusion he could draw from the scene. He didn't know what method they used, but it was clear that controlling villains with anklets was no longer possible. However Suho didn't need to worry about such things. That was the Association's job, so Suho decided to focus solely on his investigation.

"Gray, memorize all the scents here."

"Woof!"

Gray sniffed around even more diligently at Suho's words. It was too difficult to memorize 500 faces. Besides, it was unlikely that the villains would be walking around openly. This was the reason why the other bounty hunters had coveted Suho earlier.

Just as Suho finished inspecting the entire Jisan Prison...

Slide!

"Hey, is the investigation over?" A bounty hunter approached Suho with a smile.

"If you're done, how about we team up?"

"..."

Suho stopped and silently looked at his face. At the same time, Gray glared at the man, baring his teeth.

"Grrr!"

"Hehe. What a cute puppy. Quite the killer instinct for a tracking Summoned beast."

[My liege, he's suspicious.] At Beru's warning, Suho nodded in response.

[He reeks of blood, human blood. This one has killed many people.]

"Oh, you can tell that... ? You have some amazing Summoned beasts. You're quite useful, aren't you?" Even after hearing Beru's words, the man wasn't fazed; he just shrugged with a relaxed expression. Then, he took out his wallet from his pocket and showed it to Suho.

[Association-Certified Bounty Hunter]

Name: Kang Taeshik

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Rank: B

Suho's eyes lit up as he saw the Association ID.

"Despite my looks, I'm one of the few professional villain hunters. I'm different from those other amateurs, so teaming up with me will definitely be helpful." Kang Taeshik formally introduced himself.

"You said I smell of human blood? Of course I do. I've killed more people than magic beasts."

"I have a license, so I obviously didn't kill civilians. Only villains."

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Strangely enough, Kang Taeshik was a real bounty hunter who specialized in hunting villains instead of raiding dungeons. But seeing the lingering suspicion on Suho's face, Kang Taeshik shrugged and offered a gesture of goodwill. "How about this then? I'll share the information I've gathered first. Then you can decide whether to team up with me after that."

"Information?"

"Yeah. I probably have the most information among all the bounty hunters gathered here."

"Let's hear it then."

There was no reason to refuse when he was offering to share information first. Suho calmly nodded, and Kang Taeshik smiled like he had expected this. Then, as if he didn't want his information to leak to other competitors, he checked his surroundings and quietly began to speak.

"You know that Hwang Dongsuk, the instigator of this incident, is backed by Hwang Dongsoo, right?"

Suho nodded.

S-rank villain Hwang Dongsoo. The one who was said to have been the Shadow Soldier 'Greed' in his past life.

"Actually, Hwang Dongsuk was abandoned by Hwang Dongsoo a long time ago."

"...Abandoned?"

"Yeah. To be precise, Hwang Dongsuk abandoned Hwang Dongsoo."

Kang Taeshik began to reveal the information he knew.

The Scam Brothers.

Until just before the Cataclysm, the Hwang siblings, Dongsuk and Dongsoo, were nothing more than petty criminals known by that nickname. They were inherently greedy, and as they aged, their avarice only grew stronger. The day they were released after serving their sentences, they naturally returned to their criminal ways. They lived a reckless life, going in and out of prison as if it were their own home. But the Hwang brothers were quite content with their lives. After all, they were brothers; they were on the same side. However, immediately after the Cataclysm... Their lives took a 180-degree turn.

"What, what is this?"

"Brother, did you awaken?" The older brother, Hwang Dongsuk, was the first to awaken. The moment he felt the tremendous power surging within him.... He realized.

That he no longer needed to live a life of deceit and scams.

The Cataclysm had just occurred. The world was in chaos. And at that time, Hwang Dongsuk became a villain. He transformed from a swindler to an armed robber, raiding convenience stores and restaurants.

"Muahahaha! Money! Money!"

Earning money has never been so easy! The days he spent racking his brains and scamming people for a measly sum felt utterly insignificant now. And...

"Tsk. Still haven't awakened? Are you talentless?" He began to see his brother, who hadn't awakened even a shred of magic power yet, as pathetic.

"Brother, I heard that people can suddenly awaken even after a while. So just wait a little longer..."

"Tsk. Useless."

Despite his brother's blatant insults, the younger brother couldn't say anything because it was true. Magic power was innate. It wasn't something you could suddenly awaken through effort.

And eventually, a few days later...

"Get lost."

"Brother? What do you mean..."

"Get lost, you incompetent fool!" Hwang Dongsuk abandoned his brother.

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When they were scamming people, having two was better than one, but now there was no reason to share his hard-earned money with his brother. After heartlessly abandoning his brother, Hwang Dongsuk started pillaging all over the country. His mobility was incomparable to when he was dragging his slow brother around. And since he didn't have to share the money he earned with his brother, no matter how much he spent, his wealth kept growing. But those good times didn't last long.

One day, the Hunter Association was suddenly established and Chairman Woo Jinchul declared an all-out war against villains. Hwang Dongsuk was easily captured by the

Association hunters who came to deal with him. He tried to fight back, but he was helplessly subdued.

Until then, Hwang Dongsuk, intoxicated by his own power, hadn't realized that he was a frog in a well, only after being dragged to the Association was he made aware of his own insignificance.

Around that time, the magic power measuring device developed overseas was introduced in Korea, and Hwang Dongsuk learned that he was only a C-rank Awakened. And as a natural consequence, he was sent to the infamous Jisan Prison, where villains from all over the country were incarcerated. To add insult to injury Hwang Dongseok heard a piece of news there. His younger brother Hwang Dongsoo became an S-class villain.

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"...So you're saying that Hwang Dongsuk was bluffing the whole time in prison, pretending to be close to his brother?"

"Exactly. You catch on quick." Kang Taeshik grinned and nodded at Suho's question.

Hwang Dongsuk and Hwang Dongsoo were a notorious fraud duo in Korea, committing crimes and serving time together for over 20 years. The story of their deep brotherly bond was well-known. Who would have guessed that they suddenly had a falling out? And even if someone had known, it wouldn't have made much difference. Blood-related siblings often fight while growing up. But no matter how much they bicker, they usually make up and become close again, right? However for Hwang Dongsuk, who was locked up in prison alone, that was impossible. No matter how much he wanted to 'reconcile' and get along again, it was impossible without talking to each other first.

"Hwang Dongsuk had no way to contact Hwang Dongsoo, who was hiding from the Association." But... Not having a way to contact him wasn't a problem. It meant that others had no way of confirming that their relationship had soured.

"So Hwang Dongsuk could comfortably threaten others, saying that if they messed with him, Hwang Dongsoo would come visit them or their loved ones."

"That must have been quite effective."

"It was incredibly effective! Only one sentence was needed to make even A-rank villains bow their heads to Hwang Dongsuk."

Suho understood why Hwang Dongsuk had become the prison's kingpin. He had already witnessed the power of an S-rank, like Thomas Andre or his own mother. Someone with similar power becoming an awakened criminal was like a walking natural disaster. From the villains' perspective, defying Hwang Dongsuk meant facing the terrifying prospect of that unstoppable force.

"Moreover, Hwang Dongsuk got lucky. The real reason Hwang Dongsoo was known as an S-rank villain was because of Choi Jongin."

Those who officially work as hunters undergo mana measurement and register with the Hunter Association. However, many villains skip this process. Hwang Dongsoo was one such villain who had never officially measured his mana level. Despite this, he was declared an S-rank villain due to a specific incident.

"Chairman Woo Jinchul sent Choi Jongin to catch him, but he got away. That pretty much sealed the deal." From that day on, Hwang Dongsoo became someone 'untouchable', as even the Association's strongest S-rank hunter, Choi Jongin, couldn't catch him. He disappeared after that day, but that only made him even scarier. No one knew where he was or what he was plotting.

Listening to his fellow hunters' explanation, Suho asked the question that had been on his mind the most. "Mr. Kang Taeshik, right? How do you know all this?"

"Ah, that?" Kang Taeshik shrugged as if it were nothing.

"I used to be Hwang Dongsuk's cellmate. I heard it directly from him when he was badmouthing his brother before Hwang Dongsoo awakened."

"...You were a villain?"

"No. I awakened while in prison, so I immediately volunteered to become an Association hunter. Is that a satisfactory answer?"

Suho nodded.

The Hunter Association had always been short on manpower since its establishment. In a world where you could rake in money by entering dungeons, who would want to be a civil servant? So, the Association often resorted to recruiting talented individuals from among the villains who showed potential for rehabilitation or hadn't committed serious crimes after awakening. Kang Taeshik was one of them.

"So, what do you think? Do you like my information? Of course, I am not going to stop you if you want to ditch me now and use my info for yourself." Kang Taeshik was surprisingly cool about it.

But he was also clever.

"Ah, of course." Kang Taeshik met Suho's eyes with a meaningful smile.

"This might not be all the information I have. So choose wisely."

"Let's team up."

Kang Taeshik's smile deepened at Suho's response. "Well, that's an expected answer from a young summoner. So we're partners now, right?"

Suho and Kang Taeshik left Jisan Prison together. And they immediately set Gray on the trail of the villains' scent.

"Woof!"

Needless to say, Gray's senses were far superior to those of trained police dogs. He could even smell mana.

"I knew teaming up was the right choice." Kang Taeshik nodded in satisfaction as he followed Gray, who was confidently leading the way.

"Hey, Sung Suho, right? How about we stick together even after this is over?"

"I'll think about it."

"Don't be so hesitant. It's not like summoners are popular in dungeons..."

Thump!

Suddenly, both Suho and Kang Taeshik's expressions changed as they focused ahead. At the end of the path Gray was running towards, they could see a small town.

"...They're hiding in a town, not the forest. This is troublesome." Kang Taeshik's eyes sharpened.

Yamri Village, Yeongbuk-myeon, Pocheon.

In reality, this place was closer to a small town than a city. It was said that in the past, the area was densely forested with pine trees, attracting thieves who thrived in the darkness. Hence the name Yamri (夜味里), meaning "village that enjoys the night." It was surrounded by lush forests and mountains. Pocheon itself was a region with

numerous mountains that were the perfect area to hide in, so they naturally assumed the villains would have fled there...

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"But they boldly hid in a village inhabited by people?"

"They're using the citizens as hostages."

"This is going to be tricky." Suho and Kang Taeshik, who had been following Gray without hesitation, had to stop at the entrance of the village. From now on, they needed to move with utmost caution. If the villains hiding in the village found out that bounty hunters were coming, things could get complicated.

"Suho, your mana control is..." Hmm. Kang Taeshik looked at Suho with clear surprise in his eyes. He could no longer sense any mana from him.

'Can a Summoner control their mana this perfectly?' Kang Taeshik couldn't help but be amazed.

Summoners have difficulty containing their mana within. This is especially true when they have their summoned beasts out, like now.

"Are you perhaps not a Summoner but... No, never mind." Kang Taeshik was about to ask something but stopped himself.

He then concealed his own mana and hid the dagger he was holding in his bosom. Unlike him Suho had no weapons to hide. He had been carrying all his weapons in the inventory from the start.

"Suho, do you know why I chose you out of all the bounty hunters?"

"You said it was because I'm a Summoner."

"That's the main reason, but also because you look the most basic."

"Basic?"

"Yeah. The most important thing when catching villains is to not look like a hunter."

Most of the bounty hunters gathered at Jisan Prison were wearing armor. Anyone could tell they were hunters just by looking at them. It was natural for them to protect themselves from villain attacks, but the villains weren't fools either; they would simply see them from afar and hide.

But Suho was different.

Just like Kang Taeshik, a professional villain hunter, he looked like an ordinary person on the outside. But that wasn't enough. The young wolf, Gray, was emitting mana. If they entered the village with him like this, it would be like announcing to the villains that a Summoner was here.

But if they unsummoned Gray, they would lose their way to track the villains' scent. When Kang Taeshik pointed this out, Suho looked at Gray.

'His appearance is passable.'

Even though he was a wolf, he was still young and small, so if they put a leash on him, they could pretend they were just taking their pet for a walk.

"Gray, can you hide your mana?"

"Woof?"

Seeing Gray tilt his head in confusion, Suho gave up. Even using Spirit Possession, would just make his own appearance deviate from that of an ordinary person.

Just then.

[The King of Beasts, the Fang Monarch, requests a conversation.]

[Will you accept?]

[Y/N]

'Rakan?' Suho tilted his head in confusion as Rakan suddenly requested a conversation.

'A conversation request out of the blue... Hmm, accept.'

The moment Suho pressed accept.

[Passive skill '(Unknown)' is activated.]

Whoosh!

Suho's vision turned completely white. A world of perfect emptiness. Standing alone at the edge of that vast white world. He couldn't help but feel a sense of déjà vu.

'Didn't I come here once before?'

However the atmosphere here felt distinctly different from back then. The energy here felt wilder and more primal.

'This is...?' Suho's eyes widened as he slowly looked around. He was surrounded by countless wolves. They were all emitting a powerful aura that sent shivers down his spine.

Kuwoooooooooohh-!

Their roars echoed endlessly through the vast white space. And in the midst of it all, a massive white wolf appeared before Suho.

[Rakan the Fang Monarch]

Suho couldn't help but be amazed at the overwhelming pressure emanating from the beast. But at the same time, he felt a sense of familiarity.

'Is this.... Rakan's true form?'

Then the King of Beasts opened his mouth and spoke in a majestic voice that shook Suho's soul.

[I am pleased to meet you again. And to think that you would grow this much in such a short time.]

[I have a proposition for you.]

'A proposition?'

[Yes. You seem to be using my successor mainly for strengthening your body these days.]

'Ah, that's true.' Suho nodded.

The reason was simple. Gray was too weak. Suho had tried to level him up whenever he could, but he was still weak.

'But he also seems useful for tracking.'

Since it was the realm of consciousness, Suho's thoughts were conveyed to Rakan without any filter.

Hearing this, Rakan clicked his tongue in disapproval. [Isn't it too pathetic for the next King of Beasts to only be used for sniffing?]

But that was the reality.

[So, I have a proposition. There's a way to make Gray stronger.] Suho's eyes sparkled at those words.

'There is?'

[Yes. You need to give Gray my sacred relic.]

'Rakan's Fang?' Suho's eyes widened.

The item: 'Rakan's Fang', Rakan's sacred relic, had been collecting dust in his inventory ever since he obtained Vulcan's Horn.

'Can Gray use that fang like dentures?'

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[Dentures is probably not the name I would use, but yes it's possible. I haven't said anything so far because you've been using it as a weapon, but if Gray inherits it, he'll also get all of its abilities.]

'Let's do it.'

Suho readily agreed. Then, a thought suddenly occurred to him.

'Wait. Does that mean I can give him other fangs too?'

[...What?] Rakan looked puzzled.

Suho grinned mischievously. 'I happen to have a spare fang. No even better, a spare poison fang, lying around in my inventory.'

[W-Wait a minute.] Rakan looked flustered.

1

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'What? Can't I? You're the King of Beasts, right? Snakes are beasts too.'

[...Ugh. Fine.] After a moment of groaning at Suho's words, Rakan finally nodded.

[He's so weak now that even a venomous snake's fang will be of some use to him.]
Then, with a displeased expression, he stared into the empty space in front of Suho.

Fwoosh!

Two swords materialized from thin air before Suho.

[Item: Rakan's Fang]

[A sword crafted from the fang of Rakan, the King of Beasts. It houses Rakan's spirit, and those of lower rank who wield it risk having their bodies taken over.]

Acquisition Difficulty: ??

Type: Sword

Attack Power: 60

Effect: 'Contempt for the Weak'

– Inflicts the 'Fear' status on a designated target for 1 minute. (All stats -50%)

Effect: 'Fatal Wound':

– 20% chance to inflict critical damage exceeding 3 times the normal damage.

[Item: Kasaka's Venom Fang]

[A dagger made from Kasaka's poison fang. It retains Kasaka's poison, inflicting 'Paralysis' and 'hemorrhage' effects upon attack. Can be stored in inventory or sold at the shop.]

Acquisition Difficulty: C

Type: Dagger

Attack Power: 25

Effect: 'Paralysis'

– The attacked target becomes unable to move .

Effect: 'Hemorrhage'

– The attacked target's HP is consumed at a rate of 1% every second.

These were the weapons which had been gathering dust in his inventory ever since he acquired the second Vulcan Horn. Even after checking their item information again, their stats seemed so underwhelming that he doubted he'd ever use them again.

'I was thinking of selling them, but I guess I found a way to recycle them instead.' Suho smiled in satisfaction.

[Recycle? You might not be aware but my sacred relic was meant to be used this way from the start.]

'Oh, really?' Rakan's words reminded Suho of something.

Back when he first touched 'Rakan's Fang' in the Beast's Sanctuary, hadn't the sword constantly shouted something at him?

"Prove you are worthy of being a King!"

In fact, Rakan's Fang wasn't actually Rakan's 'fang,' but his 'baby tooth.' In other words, it was a tusk that fell out as he grew, which the lower tribes had received and turned into a sacred relic.

Its purpose was, of course, to create Rakan's successor.

It was a precaution they had prepared in case Rakan died in the war against the Rulers someday. That was why, if Rakan's Fang fell into the hands of someone unworthy, their body would be taken over by the spirit residing inside.

[And the reason my essence resides in the sacred relic is to act as a guide raising my successor to become as strong as possible.]

'Raise them? By nagging?'

[Well, something like that. You understand well.]

2

'There's someone like that next to me too.' Suho was, of course, thinking about Beru.

Beru didn't directly contribute to battles, but he constantly pointed out Suho's shortcomings and pushed him to improve. His words and actions were never meant to belittle or irritate Suho. He simply did it because... He knew.

How powerful the true 'Monarchs' were.

What true strength was.

Perhaps from now on, the spirit residing in Rakan's Fang would play a similar role for Gray.

After finishing his explanation, Rakan chuckled and looked at Suho. [Anyway, I'm eternally grateful to you. It's all thanks to you that Gray has grown enough to accept the sacred relic.]

Then he reached out and grabbed the two swords floating in the air.

And then.

Fwoosh!

The two swords turned into silver dust in his hands and scattered.

Countless system messages appeared before Suho in succession.

Ding! Ding!

[Gray has equipped 'Item: Rakan's Fang'.]

[Gray has equipped 'Item: Kasaka's venom Fang'.]

[Gray has learned skill: 'Contempt for the Weak'.]

[Gray has learned skill: 'Fatal wound'.]

[Gray has learned skill: 'Paralysis'.]

[Gray has learned skill: 'Hemorrhage'.]

'Wow. This is pretty amazing.' Suho couldn't help but admire it.

The effects from the swords had been transferred directly to Gray as skills. If Gray could properly utilize them, he would be significantly more helpful in battles.

'This is truly perfect recycling!'

[Tsk. I told you it's not recycling. But nevermind, it's time for you to return to your world.] Rakan, still looking displeased, sighed and sent Suho back to reality.

[Take good care of Gray from now on.]

Whoosh!

"...Woof?"

When Suho's consciousness returned, the little wolf Gray was right in front of him, his eyes wide with surprise. He had sensed the new power surging within him.

'His appearance hasn't changed. No wait. Did his fangs always look this sharp and menacing?'

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But his looks however weren't important.

[Gray Lv.50]

Gray's level had increased, by a whopping 15 levels! Of course, this growth wasn't solely due to absorbing the power of the items.

'It's because Rakan's spirit now resides within Gray.'

The inheritance of power. It was probably similar to when Sirka got the 'Ice Tree Spear' from the Frost Monarch.

"...So, you're saying there's a way to hide this summons's mana?" Kang Taeshik, who asked again not having received a response, made Suho grin as he looked at Gray.

"Gray, can you do it?"

"Woof!" Gray perked up his ears at Suho's words and then lowered his body. Rakan's spirit within his body was teaching him how to hide his power.

And then...

"...Amazing. It actually worked?" Kang Taeshik's eyes widened in surprise.

The mana that had been emanating from Gray disappeared like a lie. He couldn't help but admire it.

"He's quite the outstanding Summoned beast, despite his looks. This makes things easier." As Kang Taeshik said, they now had the absolute upper hand against the villains. They could track them, but they were unaware of their presence.

"Shall we go then?"

"Yeah, lead the way."

"Woof!"

Suho and Kang Taeshik, with Gray in the lead, entered Yamri Village. Gray, with his ears perked up, sniffed around confidently, tracking the villains' scent, but his actions looked no different from a normal puppy on a walk. His size and appearance weren't threatening at all, so even without a leash, he looked perfectly normal.

"The village is quiet. Too quiet..." Kang Taeshik's eyes sharpened as he took in the village's atmosphere. The entire Yamri Village gave off an eerie feeling, as if it had been abandoned.

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"Listen as we walk." He whispered to Suho.

"There used to be many military bases around this village, because of Pocheons' proximity to North Korea. Of course, now that country has turned into a monster field, so there's no need to defend against their army. From last year, it seems their purpose has changed to defending against the magic beasts from the north."

"That's correct. You've done your research, but currently there are no soldiers here..."

Being near a restricted area with military bases, there should have been at least a few soldiers on leave there. But Yamri Village was quiet, devoid of even that.

"It's because of the Association." Kang Taeshik explained.

"When Chairman Woo Jin-chul went to North Korea, the government sent all the military units in this area to support the Association."

"Even the non-awakened soldiers?"

"Yes. Hunters are still human. They need to eat in between battles and have someone stand guard at night when they sleep. You never know when magic beasts might attack." In short, the soldiers were responsible for all the miscellaneous tasks so that the Associations' hunters could focus solely on fighting.

"So, basically, the businesses in this village are going bankrupt left and right. It is filled with shops and restaurants solely for the soldiers." Perhaps that's why most of the visible stores were temporarily closed. But it wasn't completely devoid of people.

"At least the convenience store is open."

And Gray was heading straight for that place...

"Welcome!"

As they opened the door and entered, a part-timer greeted them cheerfully.

Crash! Items fell, as Suho and Kang Taeshik, without a word, suddenly lunged at the worker.

"Ah! What the f...?!"

The part-timer, who had been subdued with his arms twisted, struggled violently in surprise.

Kang Taeshik smirked and rolled up the part-timer's pants leg. The electronic anklet was clearly visible.

"Your acting was terrible. What kind of person greets customers so cheerfully these days?"

2

"...!"

The part-timer, who had been smiling kindly at first, twisted his face like a demon.

"Damn it! Everyone, come out!" At that moment, three villains emerged from the convenience store's storage room and unleashed flames at Suho and Kang Taeshik.

Fwoosh!

In response, Kang Taeshik mercilessly slit the throat of the villain he was holding with his dagger. He then grabbed the body with one hand and used it as a shield against the flames.

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Boom!

"Damn it! Just kill them!"

"They're bounty hunters!"

"There are only two of them!"

Crash!

Whoosh!

In an instant, fireballs flew in all directions, collapsing the convenience store's shelves and shattering the fluorescent lights. The intense heat of the flames was spreading

rapidly. However, contrary to their words, the villains were just trying to escape amidst the chaos.

"Stop them, or they'll get away!" Kang Taeshik shouted at Suho and charged towards the villains. He then began to swing the two daggers in his hands indiscriminately.

Slash!

Slash!

Slash!

"Sh... Shield!" One of the villains hurriedly cast a transparent barrier to block the attack.

However.

"Growl!"

He failed to notice that in the midst of the chaos, a small wolf pup was approaching him from behind. Gray, who stealthily closed the distance, swiftly bit into his Achilles tendon.

"Argh!"

[Effect: 'Fatal wound' has been activated.]

[Effect: 'Hemorrhage' has been activated.]

[The target's HP will be consumed at a rate of 1% every second.]

"You damn rat!" He screamed and kicked Gray with his foot.

But Gray, like a real rat, nimbly dodged the kick and immediately bit into the thigh of another villain standing nearby.

"Ugh?!"

[Effect: 'Paralysis' has been activated.]

Thud!

The villain suddenly stumbled and fell on his face dramatically.

"Your Summoned beast is pretty good, huh?" Kang Taeshik whistled, dodging the shield and finishing off the paralyzed villain.

Slash! Another head flew off.

Slash! And the next villain lost his life as well.

"Weak. You are way too weak." Kang Taeshik wiped the blood splattered on his face with the back of his hand and grinned cruelly.

"Why do D-ranks even bother becoming villains?"

Then, he looked back at Suho, who was standing behind him, and asked, "Why are you just standing there dumbfounded? Don't tell me it's your first time seeing someone die?"

"S-Stay a-away... Stay away from me!"

Suho was approaching a villain who was hiding behind a transparent shield, cowering against the wall in fear. Blood was continuously flowing from his ankle due to the 'Hemorrhage' skill effect.

"Don't tell me you feel sorry for him and want to let him live?" Kang Taeshik chuckled and slowly walked towards Suho. Behind him, the shelves were burning, and the fire was spreading, but that wasn't a significant threat to an Awakened person.

"You can't be a bounty hunter with such a weak heart..."

That was when it happened.

Rustle!

The corpses that Kang Taeshik had just decapitated suddenly rose and attacked him from behind.

CREATORS' THOUGHTS



Craftyprogamer

Solo Leveling: Ragnarok [FAN TL] Chapter 144 - Chapter 143

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Bang!

Sensing a presence behind him, Kang Taeshik instinctively turned and blocked the attack. He then looked at the corpses attacking him and shouted in shock.

"How can corpses...!"

An unbelievable situation was unfolding. The corpses of the villains he had personally decapitated were rising and attacking him. Even the severed heads, previously rolling on the floor, were enveloped in a blue aura and floated up, reattaching themselves to their necks!

"Undead?!"

Though surprised, Kang Taeshik reacted quickly. He immediately lowered his stance and swung his daggers at them.

Slash!

Slash!

Slash!

Against the enemies that don't die, the first priority is to take away their mobility. Kang Taeshik's attacks mercilessly severed the undead's legs. But once again, the blue aura leaked out and reattached the severed limbs.

[Groooooowl!]

"What the hell are these things..." No matter how much he chopped them up, the undeads' bodies kept coming back together. Kang Taeshik, gritting his teeth, was forced to retreat. At that moment, three of them simultaneously attacked him.

Thump!

Suho, who had been still until now, grabbed the corner of a fallen display shelf and swung it.

Crash!

The large convenience store shelf smashed into the three undead, shattering their bodies, and itself splitting into multiple pieces.

"Whoa." Kang Taeshik, who had retreated momentarily, looked back at Suho with a strange expression.

"For a Summoner, you have quite a lot of strength..."

He hadn't expected any combat prowess from Suho. Guiding them here with his beast's ability was practically the end of his role. But such monstrous strength?

'Is he perhaps a Druid-type?'

These days, it was trendy to classify hunters based on their skills, by using terms from games. And one of them was 'Druid.'

Druids in games were generally divided into two main types. Those who sent their summoned beasts to the front line while supporting from the rear. Or those who fought in close combat alongside their summoned beasts. Judging by his current actions, Suho seemed to be the latter, a hybrid between a Summoner and a Tanker.

'...He might be more useful than I thought.'

Kang Taeshik, lost in thought for a moment, snapped back to reality and focused on where the undead had been thrown to. Physical attacks couldn't kill them.

Groan!

As expected, the undead were wriggling under the shattered shelf, getting back up unharmed.

Moreover...

[Groooooowl!]

[Groooooowl!]

Perhaps due to the earlier commotion, more undead started appearing and swarming outside the convenience store.

"We came here to catch villains, and now we have to deal with this?!" Kang Taeshik let out a hollow laugh, his expression incredulous.

The convenience store was ablaze. Undead that kept getting back up no matter how much he dismembered them. It was like a scene straight out of an apocalyptic movie. No, at least zombies in movies could be killed. The problem with these guys was that they reattached their severed body parts no matter what he did to them.

Kang Taeshik gripped his daggers in reverse and shouted.

"Sung Suho! Let's get out of the building! Take the front line with your Summoned beast!"

"..."

But there he heard no response. At that moment, Suho was recalling the 'Mad Tyrant' he had encountered in the Demon Realm. If the Mad Tyrant was a parasitic demon that wore the corpses of demons like armor, wasn't it possible that these zombies were also someone possessing dead human bodies?

'Could they be apostles of Itarim?'

But something felt different from back then, even though he wasn't quite sure what.

'The obvious difference is that there are no name tags above their heads.' Which was evidence that these undead weren't normal magic beasts.

1

Moreover...

"Uhhh, uwaaaaah...!"

Suho's gaze was drawn to the screaming villain who had caught his eye earlier. He was still hiding inside the shield, bleeding profusely, but the sight of his comrades turning into undead had made him lose it.

'Alright. Let's start with this guy.' Suho narrowed his eyes and shouted.

"Mr. Kang Taeshik!"

"What! I said I need some help here!" Kang Taeshik was busy dealing with the undead swarming in from the outside.

"Buy me some time there!" Suho ordered.

"Wh-what?! I'm an assassin, not a tank...!"

Kang Taeshik was flustered. Of course, even as an assassin, a B-rank hunter like him could handle this many enemies quite easily.

Without waiting for his response Suho strode towards the villain hiding inside the shield.

"H-hey! S-stay away! Stay away from me!"

"Hey!!" As Suho approached, the villain cowered in fear.

"Come out for a second. Let's talk."

"N-no! Stay away from me!"

Bang!

Suho's fist mercilessly struck the transparent wall surrounding him. The shield however was sturdy. From inside, the villain shouted at Suho with malice.

"You think you can break my shield with brute strength?! My shield won't collapse until my mana runs out...!"

Bang!

Suho's fist struck the shield again, and the villain instinctively flinched. But the shield remained intact, giving the villain even more confidence.

"I told you it won't work! Stop wasting your energy and just get lost! You can't break my shield with your bare fists...!"

Bang!

"It w-won't..."

Bang!

"B-break..."

As Suho's punches grew stronger, the villain's voice grew weaker. Why was this happening?

It couldn't be. His shield shouldn't break from such crude physical attacks.

"Don't be so sure." Suho smirked and raised his fist once more. This time enveloped in black energy.

1

"If I hit it hard enough, it'll break."

And then, Bang!

Shatter!

The villain's eyes widened in disbelief, a fragment of the shield he was so confident in had shattered right in front of him, leaving a huge hole. Through which, Suho's hand reached in and grabbed him by the collar, pulling him out.

Gulp!

"H-how..."

"Hey." Suho lifted the shocked villain with one hand and glared into his eyes.

"Come out."

"P-please spare me...!"

"Stop with the pathetic acting."

Suho stared intently into the villain's widened eyes. No, to be precise, he was staring at something beyond those eyes.

"I said come out. You, hiding inside there." Suho smiled, a chilling grin spreading across his face.

As soon as he finished speaking. The villain's face, gripped by Suho's hand, went blank.

"...Ah." The villain tilted his head at an odd angle, staring blankly into Suho's eyes and mumbling.

"How did you know? How did You know? How did You know? How did You know? How did YOU KNOW?"

Bang!

"Oh, sorry. You were so creepy, I hit you without thinking." Suho's fist slammed into the creature's head, silencing its incessant chatter.

Then, with dilated pupils, it stammered,

"...You, you're much creepier than me."

"Get out while I'm asking nicely."

"How could you know? How could you...?" The creature tried to repeat the same words, but Suho raised his fist again, silencing it.

'How did I know?' Suho's gaze shifted to the creature's head.

[???

Name tags full of question marks.

Among all the villains encountered in the convenience store, only this one had such a strange name tag above his head. That's why Gray attacked this one first.

"Beru." At Suho's command, Beru, who immediately understood his intent, replied.

[I don't sense Itarim's presence. Rather, it feels more like...] Beru had fought alongside Sung Jin-woo against countless enemies and was familiar with most races. In this situation, there was only one possibility.

[It seems to be a member of a Demonic Spirit Clan.]

"Demonic Spirit?" Demonic Spirit (魔靈). It literally meant an evil spirit.

[Yes. They are mainly ghost-type monsters that live in the Spirit Realm. Being non-material entities, they are difficult to kill with physical attacks.]

"As expected." Suho nodded and looked around.

Something had felt off all along. How could a fire be raging like this without the buildings' fire suppression system activating? Suho grabbed the Demonic Spirit by the collar again and said,

"I don't know where the illusion starts, but dispel it now."

"I-I can't. I'll die if I do." The Demonic Spirit panicked and shook its head vigorously.

But it's feigned expression didn't fool Suho. It was also part of the act. Suho tightened his grip.

"Should I kill you now?"

"It's a lie. You lie. You can't kill me..." That was when it happened.

[Skill: 'Bloodlust' activated.] The Demonic Spirit shuddered as it met Suho's gaze, its dilated pupils reflecting pure terror.

[Effect: 'Fear' has been activated.]

[The target's stats are reduced by 50% for 1 minute.]

What was this feeling?! The Demonic Spirit felt its body grow limp, as if it were struggling underwater. And it saw it. The deep abyss contained within the black shadow stretching behind Suho.

"Who, who are you? Why do you carry such a deep aura of death?"

The Demonic Spirit felt itself shiver in fear before Suho. It wasn't just because of the Bloodlust skill. As a spiritual being, the Demonic Spirit felt as if it could be swallowed at any moment, by the endless abyss always accompanying Suho.

"...Alright, alright." Finally, the Demonic Spirit, overwhelmed by fear, succumbed to Suho's demand. At that moment.

*Fwaaaaah-!

The illusion that had enveloped the convenience store vanished. And the true state of the village, hidden beneath the illusion, was revealed.

"Ugh. What the hell is this?" Kang Taeshik, who had been grappling with the undead outside, grimaced.

Suddenly, a sickening stench of blood assaulted his nose, and an unbelievably gruesome scene unfolded before his eyes. Countless corpses lay scattered in front of the convenience store, drenched in blood. The once peaceful and quiet Yamri Village... was now a scene of utter devastation. A horrific massacre had taken place here even before they arrived!

"Were we under an illusion? I didn't hear anything about a villain with this kind of skill among the escapees." At Kang Taeshik's words, Suho glared at the Demonic Spirit with a ferocious expression, grinding his teeth.

"Tell me everything. What happened here."

"Th-that's... Aaaaagh!" The Demonic Spirit was about to respond when it suddenly started screaming.

CREATORS' THOUGHTS



Craftyprogamer

Solo Leveling: Ragnarok [FAN TL] Chapter 145 - Chapter 144

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"Tsk. Some fool has let them break the barrier." the old man, who was leisurely resting on the sofa, clicked his tongue and turned his gaze towards the window.

"What?!" At his words, Hwang Dongsuk, sitting in front of him completely wasted, sobered up instantly.

"Shit! Are they already after us?!" He jumped up and frantically looked out the window.

The blood-red sky. The streets covered in blood and corpses. The undead walking on them all moving in the same direction. It was all evidence that outsiders had entered the village. Hwang Dongsuk gritted his teeth and glared at the old man.

"This wasn't part of the deal! You said you erased all traces, what is this?!"

"Calm down. There are only two of them who entered the village. It's just that they happened to find the Demonic Spirit that was the medium for the illusion, so the illusion was broken."

Hearing the old man's explanation, Hwang Dongsuk's face relaxed again.

"What? Only two?"

"Yes, two. They're probably just hunters passing by."

"Heh heh. Is that so?" He licked his lips with a wicked smile.

"Good. If they're hunters, they'll probably have some weapons on them, right?"

They had managed to escape from the prison, but it was still too early to relax. Although they had looted as many weapons as possible from the guards, most of his subordinates were still unarmed. It was imperative to secure as many weapons as possible before the pursuers found them.

"What's their level?"

"Well. They found the Demonic Spirit I planted in your subordinates, so at least one of them must be a magic-type hunter above B-rank."

"A magic-type above B-rank?"

Hwang Dongsuk rolled his eyes and started calculating in his head.

'Hmm. Of course, they can't be S-rank.'

S-rank hunters were like walking precious gems. They weren't the type to leisurely pass through a remote village like this. The probability of those high-value individuals appearing here just to catch some villains was close to zero. And for the same reason, even A-ranks were too valuable to become bounty hunters.

"Heh heh. Then it's just two B-ranks at most. Magic-types are a bit tricky, but they can't win against overwhelming numbers."

Hwang Dongsuk called one of his subordinates waiting outside and gave him an order.

"Hunters have infiltrated. Gather everyone who's resting in the houses. There's a chance they're two B-ranks, so overwhelm them with numbers."

"Yes, sir! I'll relay the message!"

Hwang Dongsuk smirked at the sight of his subordinate stiffening at his command and hurriedly running outside.

"That bastard. Finally got some discipline. Guess you need to see someone die to learn your lesson."

Even outside the prison, Hwang Dongsuk, a mere C-rank Awakened, still reigned as their king. But this hierarchy was a precarious balancing act that could collapse at any moment. The only reason the villains still followed Hwang Dongsuk was that he was the older brother of the S-rank villain, Hwang Dongsoo.

"Hey, aren't you going to help?" Hwang Dongsuk, who was about to leave after sending his subordinate off with new orders, suddenly turned around and asked.

The old man, still leisurely sitting on the sofa, gazing out the window with an unreadable expression, replied nonchalantly without even looking at him.

"As you can see, I'm not fond of physical exertion. Call me when you've dealt with the bounty hunters and I'll recast the illusion on the village."

"...Alright." Hwang Dongsuk looked slightly displeased but decided to not argue. He could already hear his subordinates gathering outside at his call.

"Everyone, grab your weapons! There are only two of them!"

After Hwang Dongsuk left.

Bzzzz!

A bee flew in and landed on the window sill in front of the old man, who was still gazing into the distance with an enigmatic look.

"...You've arrived." Finally, a faint smile appeared on the old man's lips.

* * *

[Screeeech!]

"Hmm?"

Suho couldn't help but be surprised. Suddenly, a blue aura erupted from the Demonic Spirits', or rather, the villain's body, accompanied by a scream.

Thud!

The villain fainted on the spot. Beru, with a grave expression, muttered,

[The Demonic Spirit inhabiting this human's body has been annihilated.]

"Why so suddenly, is there any reason?"

[It seems there was some kind of restriction placed on it by a demonic shaman. The beings of the Spirit Realm are skilled in such sorcery.]

"That means there's a high-ranking Demonic Spirit nearby." Suho nodded gravely at Beru's words.

'Come to think of it, the one who created my leveling system was also a sorcerer from the Spirit Realm.'

The Great Spellcaster Candiaru.

3

The leveling system he designed could also be considered a form of sorcery. Even if not to that extent, a high-ranking Demonic Spirit could easily place a restriction spell that would kill someone if they performed a certain action.

'This... I came to catch a few villains, but it seems I've stumbled upon something much bigger.'

"Sung Suho!" Just then, Kang Taeshik's urgent cry came from the front.

"Come quickly and help! More and more undead are swarming in!"

With the Demonic Spirit's illusion dispelled, Yamri Village started resembling a town taken straight out of an apocalyptic movie. If they were ordinary undead, a B-rank hunter like Kang Taeshik wouldn't break a sweat, but these were strange creatures that could reattach their severed limbs. And what was even worse:

"It seems these undead were originally the residents of this village! The villains must have slaughtered them all while taking over the village!" Kang Taeshik's expression was one of disbelief and shock as he spoke.

They had assumed that the villains wouldn't harm the citizens, keeping them as hostages in case their location was discovered. But that was a very civilian-like perspective.

"Damn it. These guys are crazier than I expected. This is what makes them true villains. And villains, regardless of their rank, should all be killed." Muttering this with a chilling smile, Kang Taeshik glared ahead.

Then, slashing at the undead's limbs, he shouted towards Suho. "Sung Suho! Usually, in cases like this, the one controlling these things is hiding nearby! Use your Summoned beast to find him!"

But there was no need for that. The one controlling them had already revealed himself. Suddenly, villains appeared from all directions and began attacking Suho and Kang Taeshik.

"Hahaha! So you were all hiding around here!" Despite facing an even greater crisis, Kang Taeshik's eyes gleamed with excitement.

1

Then, he turned to Suho with a cold smile. "Sung Suho, you did well. Your role ends here. From now on, it's every man for himself."

"...?" Before Suho could react.

Swoosh!

Kang Taeshik vanished from sight as if he were never there. Suho's eyes widened at the bizarre sight and Beru gritted his teeth.

'So that's why he was so relaxed even in this situation. He was hiding an ability like that.'

But Kang Taeshik didn't use his stealth skill to run away.

"Ack?!"

"What, what the?! Cough...!" Screams erupted from the villains who were attacking Kang Taeshik alongside the undead.

And then, fountains of blood spurted out.

"An assassin!"

"This is crazy! We weren't told about this!"

"They said, he's a magic-type!"

The villains, who had been emboldened by their numerical advantage were now thrown into disarray. But then...

"Tsk. An assassin? You're nothing." The magic-type villain standing behind them unleashed a fireball at the villains who were bleeding out.

Fwoosh! Boom!

"Aaaaaa!"

"Why me...!"

There was no loyalty among villains; they had merely escaped together out of convenience. The villains caught in the explosion were engulfed in flames and rolled in agony on the ground.

But it was effective.

"...Ugh!" A brief cry of pain escaped Kang Taeshik. And along with it, a translucent silhouette engulfed in flames appeared in the empty air.

"There he is! Kill him!"

The villain who had cast the fireball pointed triumphantly, and the other villains, grinning wickedly, launched a full-on attack. But amidst the chaos caused by the stealth ability, they had forgotten about one person.

"...Sillard." At Suho's quiet voice amidst the undead, the being slumbering in the Sea of Death opened its eyes.

[The King of Snow Folk, the Frost Monarch, is watching you.], Suho felt the gaze of that ancient being but still commanded confidently.

"Blessing of the Frost."

[Blessing: Blessing of the Frost]

[The King of Snow Folk, the Frost Monarch Sillard, has chosen you as his Shaman. The Shaman can summon a blizzard of frost by offering their mana as a sacrifice.]

Fwoosh!

At that moment, a chilling white wind began to swirl around Suho.

[Skill: 'Blizzard of Frost' activated.]

[Mana required: 100 per second.]

The Blizzard of Frost, which had once turned the Facade Island into a glacier, now enveloped Yamri Village.

"What the...!"

"What is this?!"

"A blizzard?!"

As the villains cried out, an intense cold engulfed them. The unbelievably cold ice gripped the legs of those standing on the ground.

"D-damn it! My legs...!" Undead and villains alike, everyone's legs began to freeze.

"...What is this?" Kang Taeshik, his stealth deactivated, looked back at Suho with a bewildered expression. Thanks to the icy wind, the flames that had started to consume his body were now extinguished.

"Using nature-type magic too... You are a Druid after all." Kang Taeshik nodded, convinced that his earlier guess was correct.

And as he turned back to face the villains, his eyes gleamed with a cruel light. Most of them here were low to mid-rank Awakened, so only a few managed to break free from the ice by themselves.

"Now you're all mine."

Slash, slash, slash, slash, slash, slash!

Kang Taeshik lunged forward, relishing the moment. He mercilessly targeted their vital points.

Necks.

Arteries.

With every swing of his daggers, blood spurted out.

"Uwaaaah!"

"Aaaagh! Run!" The villains, finally freeing their legs from the ice, started to flee in terror. But...

[Debuff: 'Curse of Frost' applied.]

[Attack Speed reduced by 30%.]

[Movement Speed reduced by 30%.]

They were still struggling within the Blizzard of Frost. Kang Taeshik however, recognized as Suho's ally by the Frost Monarch, was unaffected by the debuff. He slaughtered the fleeing villains one by one, laughing cruelly.

"This is why I love fighting humans." Unlike the monsters in dungeons, humans were so easy to kill. He shouted towards Suho with an expression of pure joy.

"Sung Suho! Let me teach you an important lesson as your senior! Remember this. Everyone can die! Even the strongest hunter, that truth remains unchanged..."

2

Kaboom!

At that moment.

Kang Taeshik's head exploded.

13

"...You arrogant bastard, acting all high and mighty."

Thud!

The villain who had blown Kang Taeshik's head off with all his magic power gritted his teeth and stomped on his corpse. He continued to trample Kang Taeshik's body repeatedly, shouting,

"That's right, you bastard! Everyone dies! Did you think you were an exception?! Huh?! Muahahaha!" Then, with a ferocious expression, he glared at Suho, the one who had summoned the blizzard, and growled.

"Now there's only one left! Kill..."

But at that moment.

"Arise."

An ominous ripple spread through Kang Taeshik's shadow behind the villain.

6

CREATORS' THOUGHTS



Craftyprogamer

Solo Leveling: Ragnarok [FAN TL] Chapter 146 - Chapter 145

Chapter 146: Chapter 145

The Sea of The Afterlife. Kang Taeshik's soul was falling into the endless darkness.

'...Is this death?' The moment of pain was brief, but the moment of death was agonizingly long.

The seemingly bottomless abyss was pulling him downwards. In this continuous fall, Kang Taeshik's soul was seeing flashbacks of his entire life. Memories were unfolding before him like a panorama. And every moment he was harming someone.

'Killing, killing, killing...'

Suddenly, Kang Taeshik looked down at his blood-soaked hands. That's right. Since awakening his abilities, he has killed countless people with these hands. There was never a day when these hands weren't stained with blood. Even he knew that he was crazy... but he enjoyed it.

That period lasted two years. He had committed petty crimes and been caught by the police before, but it had only been two years since he truly started enjoying killing as a villain hunter.

...But.

As the flashback continued, Kang Taeshik's image in the memories grew younger and younger. And at the end, the memory of 'that day' was finally revealed.

'...Yes, that was the beginning.' Suddenly, a bluish light flickered in Kang Taeshik's eyes even as he was falling into the abyss of death. Just then, he saw a young boy being beaten.

"You good-for-nothing!"

"If it weren't for you! "

"Die! Die! Die! Die! Just die!"

"Aaack! D-dad...! I'm sorry! Aaack! Please! It hurts so much...! Aaack!"

5

A broken bottle.

A small, messy room.

There, a drunken man was mercilessly beating a young boy. In that memory, the boy's body was always covered in bruises, and he was always crying loudly.

He was in pain.

He begged him to stop.

He admitted his fault.

But the father's kicks only grew more violent. After years of such relentless beatings, the boy finally realized something. To avoid being beaten further...

He had to become strong and the first step was to hold back his tears. So no matter how much pain he suffered or how scared he was, he covered his mouth and held back his screams, slowly his father's beatings would lessen. Just a little. He also had to minimize his presence as much as possible. So as not to provoke his father.

No, he had to become invisible. If he made a sound, his father would wake up. And then his father would drink again. And then... he would beat him again. So he had to live like he didn't exist in the house. Holding his breath, not to incur the wrath of his strong and terrifying father.

2

And then one day.

'...Ah.'

The boy realized. There was an easier and simpler way to avoid the beatings.

'Ah, I can just do this.'

Why hadn't he realized it sooner? He should have done this from the start. And seven-year-old Kang Taeshik. With his small hands. Killed his father.

That was Kang Taeshik's 'first murder'. And surprisingly, no one ever found out about it. No, nobody even bothered to investigate. No one could imagine that a small seven year old boy could kill his own father. The police, the doctors. Everyone concluded it was just an accident. Just a drunkard who had an accident while intoxicated.

...And so. The boy who had erased his father from the world with his own hands, looked at himself and realized.

'I'm strong.'

That's right. He was strong. After all, even strong enough to kill his terrifying father.

Realizing this, Kang Taeshik was overcome with an exhilarating thrill. Ah, that's right. I can just kill them.

No matter how scary they are.

No matter how strong they are.

'Everyone dies!'

From then on, Kang Taeshik was afraid of nothing. Because he was strong now. Because he could kill anyone if he wanted to. Of course, he wasn't some psychopathic murderer who would kill anyone indiscriminately. He had simply realized that... murder was also a potential solution for some problems.

As time passed, the Cataclysm occurred and magic beasts appeared. Kang Taeshik was lucky enough to awaken as a hunter. But when he saw magic beasts emerging from dungeons and brutally tearing people apart, he couldn't help but sigh.

'Magic beasts... they're just the same.' They only looked a little different. In the end, whether it was a magic beast or not, anyone could kill. Throughout human history, hadn't a lot more people been killed by other humans than by magic beasts? Honestly, he was disappointed.

But then.

'Kang Taeshik. You awakened recently, didn't you?'

"So what...? I've been an upstanding citizen lately."

"I know. That's why I'm here."

"What are you talking about, you old geezer?"

His sudden visit initially confused him. Woo Jinchul was the detective who had personally handcuffed him for a petty crime he committed in the past. But now he suddenly established some strange organization called the Hunter Association, and...?

"I've been thinking about what to do with you, and I came up with a good idea." Woo Jin-chul gave him a meaningful smile and made a strange proposal.

"Kang Taeshik, I've created a job perfect for you, 'Association-Certified Bounty Hunter.' "

"What's that?"

"It's basically a license to kill, sanctioned by the state."

"...Are you insane?"

"Why? You don't like it?"

"..."

He didn't particularly like Woo Jinchul's smug face, as if he was certain Kang Taeshik would accept his offer. But in the end, Kang Taeshik couldn't refuse Woo Jin-chul's proposal. Because it was honestly tempting. He would be allowed to kill people. And he'd get paid for it.

'Well, killing people is definitely easier and more fun than killing magic beasts.'

That's how Kang Taeshik became a bounty hunter, and in the past two years, he had personally killed hundreds of villains with his own hands.

'Heh heh. I've killed quite a lot.' Kang Taeshik's soul, wandering in the Sea of The Afterlife, chuckled as he witnessed each of those murders one by one. But for some reason. The more he saw the accumulation of their deaths in the flashback, the deeper Kang Taeshik's soul sank into darkness. Hundreds of hands emerged from below, pulling his soul deeper like demons.

'Let go, you bastards! I can't breathe! I can't... Cough...!' Looking back, he realized that the pit he was falling into was one he had dug himself. And then.

[Hahaha. What a delicious-looking evil spirit.]

'...!'

Kang Taeshik's soul trembled at the old man's laughter echoing from beyond the darkness. A primal sense of revulsion washed over him. At that moment, Kang Taeshik realized that his soul was trapped in the center of a magic circle made of red threads. The magic circle held his soul like a spider's web, refusing to let go.

[Come here. I shall personally turn you into a demonic spirit.] Suddenly, a skeletal hand emerged from the darkness and grabbed him by the hair.

'Kyaaaaaaaaah...!'

At that moment, an excruciating pain, as if his limbs were being torn off, surged through him. Kang Taeshik screamed horribly and desperately struggled to break free from the old man's grasp. But even that was merely entertainment for the old man.

[Hehehe. What a lovely scream. You're the perfect ingredient for a demonic spirit.]

'Aaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaah!'

[Yes, that's it. Embrace all the sins you've committed with your own hands. The process will be agonizing, but if you endure it...] The old man grinned, revealing his white teeth, from beyond the darkness.

[...You will be reborn as a thoroughly corrupted soul, eternally experiencing that pain!]

Finally, the red magic circle was complete. The old man's giant hand grabbed Kang Taeshik's soul and lifted it up.

[Kueh-kueh! Now, fallen spirit! You are mine...!]

That was when it happened.

"Arise."

3

A ray of darkness descended from above, covering Kang Taeshik's soul.

Crack!

The dark power tore through the red magic circle like it was nothing.

[W-what is this...?!] The old man cried out in surprise, losing his grip on Kang Taeshik's soul.

'Ah, this power...' Kang Taeshik, forcibly pulled upwards by the darkness, trembled with a different kind of fear.

'W-what is this memory...?'

Suddenly, memories of his past life, deeply buried within him, began to come back like a long forgotten dream. For some reason, even in those memories, he was... dying, covered in blood. And before his dying self, he saw a man looking down at him with a cold gaze.

"Let me ask you one thing." Meeting those chilling eyes, he had asked,

"What the hell are you? I've never heard of an assassin class being able to use healing magic... let alone debuff magic." But instead of answering, the man had posed a question in return.

"Say I'm a hunter who grows stronger with every battle, how powerful do you think I can become?"

"Hah..." Kang Taeshik couldn't help but laugh bitterly at the absurd question.

Did he really not know the answer?

"Your shadow... is connected to the darkness."

"Death is strength."

"You will become as strong as deep is that darkness."

1

Two lives.

Two deaths.

But in the end... Kang Taeshik's soul returned to the world once more.

[Shadow Assassin Lv. 1] [Knight Rank]

[...Great Shadow Monarch.]

Reborn as a Shadow Assassin, his entire body rippling with black energy, Kang Taeshik approached Suho, knelt on one knee, and bowed his head. Then, with an unimaginably cold and ruthless aura emanating from his eyes, he asked in a respectful manner,

[Whom may I kill?]

3

As he looked at Suho from below...

He realized that Suho's gaze was strikingly similar to the man who had ended his life once before. Suho's cold eyes then turned towards the countless villains swarming from all sides. They were murderers who had slaughtered the innocent residents of this village and taken it over. There was no mercy to be shown to them.

"Everyone. Kill them all."

[...As you command.]

The moment Suho's order fell. The Shadow Assassin, Kang Taeshik, vanished from sight.



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Solo Leveling: Ragnarok [FAN TL] Chapter 147 - Chapter 146

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Slash!

"Keyuk?!"

Swish!

"Aghh!"

In an instant, red lines were drawn across the throats of the nearby villains, one after another. Blood gushed from their cut open necks.

"...It's a stealth skill!"

"Uwaaaah! He's alive!"

Slash, slash, slash, slash, slash, slash, slash!

Under the exploding fountains of blood, the invisible assassin's daggers began to mercilessly slaughter the villains.

"B-but! His corpse is clearly over there...!"

The villains, who had been triumphant just moments ago after killing Kang Taeshik, were terrified, gawking at his lifeless body on the ground. But even in that fleeting moment.

"Ack!"

Someone's neck was severed.

"Aaack!"

Someone's leg was cut off.

"H-help!"

There was a crazed assassin chasing after those who turned to flee, letting out a silent laughter. The stealth skill Kang Taeshik possessed in life remained intact even after he became a Shadow Soldier.

"There he is!"

Whoosh! Boom!

At that moment. The magic-type villain who had set Kang Taeshik on fire earlier gritted his teeth and conjured another massive fireball.

"You useless bunch! Panicking over a single assassin!" He confidently ignited a massive flame in his hands.

"He'll die with just one hit!"

This wasn't an exaggeration or a bluff. Assassins were known for their powerful and precise attacks, but their weak defense was a major disadvantage. They didn't even wear armor, claiming it hindered their agility. That's why they were mediocre fighters who could only show their true potential when hiding behind sturdy tankers.

But what about magic-types? First of all, they didn't need to engage in hand to hand combat like assassins, so they could wear heavy and durable armor for protection. And no matter how many monsters swarmed them. Or even if an invisible enemy appeared, like now, they could just unleash wide-area magic attacks!

"Get out of the way, you idiots!"

"Move!" At the warning from behind, the villains scattered in all directions.

Whoosh!

But even as they fled, the invisible assassin continued to claim their lives. Suddenly a massive fireball flew towards the last victim and exploded covering the entire area in flames.

Kaboom!

At that moment, Kang Taeshik, now a Shadow Assassin, was inevitably caught in the explosion. But the emotion he felt as his body melted away in the intense heat wasn't fear or pain

[... Hahahaha.]

It was an overwhelming admiration and gratitude for Suho, who had taken him in as a Shadow Soldier. And at the same time he realized:

[So this is what it means to be a shadow.] He understood the true value of the power bestowed upon him.

Life and death. The one who controls the life and death of the enemy at the boundary between light and darkness. That was the essence of an assassin.

[Truly, this power is most suited for an assassin.]

He suddenly recalled the gaze of the man who had given him his first death long ago. He remembered the movements of that man, who carried the deepest shadow within him. Imitating that man's movements, Kang Taeshik gripped his two daggers in reverse and his eyes gleamed, ready for slaughter.

1

Whoosh!

A new power flowed into his melting flesh. The black energy that formed him instantly recombined his body back into shape. He darted forward like a demon and stepped on the foot of the magic-type villain who had dealt him his second death.

Crack!

"Aaack!" The villain was startled by the sudden pain in his foot and tried to retreat hastily.

[Too late.]

Slash, slash, slash, slash, slash, slash, slash!

"...!"

He mercilessly slashed at his momentarily immobilized victim.

Faster.

Faster and faster!

Even faster.

2

Countless lines were carved into the villain's body. And a horrific scream erupted from his mouth. A cruel yet beautiful spray of blood bloomed. Beneath it, the silhouette of a ruthless assassin, drenched in blood, was revealed. His eyes and mouth were curved into a wide smile.

1

[Struggle all you want. From now on, I am invincible.]

2

B-rank assassin, Kang Taeshik. The moment he became a Shadow Soldier. He had become the ultimate reaper, free from the assassin's sole weakness.

'...He's like Que.' Suho inwardly compared him to the Shadow Lancer, Que, as he watched him fight.

1

Lee Minsung, the A-rank villain. He had been modified by the Queen Bee, losing all his skills but gaining immense piercing power and speed, transforming into a lancer. He had become a specialized damage dealer, sacrificing defense for agility. But Kang Taeshik, the B-rank assassin, had become a completely different kind of Shadow Soldier. He was slightly slower, but he had the stealth skill. Que, who attacked with lightning speed, and Kang Taeshik, who was literally invisible. They were both 'Knight-rank' Shadow Soldiers, but even with the same rank, their power levels weren't exactly the same.

However...

A knight is one who fights for the king. The distinction of who was stronger wasn't particularly important. But one thing was certain. In Suho's judgment, the current Kang Taeshik had a distinct advantage that other Shadow Soldiers lacked.

[We can utilize him without worrying about exposing our abilities to anyone.]

"Indeed." Suho smiled faintly and nodded at Beru's words.

"He's going to be quite... useful."

At that moment.

Rumble!

An indescribable roar echoed, and a heavy silence descended upon Yamri Village. At the same time, something unbelievable started happening.

Rumble, Rumble, Rumble!

Suddenly, the very space of the village began to distort grotesquely. The roads and buildings warped and merged, and massive barriers started rising from the ground.

"Wh-what's happening?!"

"Uwaaaack!" Even the villains were panicking, which meant this wasn't their doing.

Kang Taeshik, who had been slaughtering the villains, hurriedly reappeared before Suho and reported: [My liege! I have something to report! The moment I died, an old man tried to corrupt my soul!]

"An old man?"

[Yes! I couldn't see his face, but I think the magic circle that bound me back then is spread throughout this entire village!]

[Why are you only saying this now?!] Beru scolded him, but Kang Taeshik remained silent. He couldn't bring himself to admit that he had been momentarily lost in the pleasure of killing.

[My liege! This is definitely a sorcery used by the members of a Demonic Spirit Clan!]

Beru had personally experienced various types of sorcery used by the Demonic Spirits during the Monarch's War. But the problem was that their magic was so diverse that he always encountered new and unfamiliar variants.

[The Demonic Spirits are vicious creatures who enjoy capturing their enemies, torturing them, and experimenting on them! That's why they're proficient in all sorts of bizarre magic and sorcery!]

The Demonic Spirits' obsessive curiosity and observational skills were infamous throughout all dimensions. And among them, the most renowned sorcerer was undoubtedly 'Candiaru.' The fact that he was able to design the leveling system that transcended human limitations was ultimately the result of countless experiments and sacrifices. One of those experiments was the 'Pyramid of Amut,' where he researched body reinforcement techniques. Considering all this evidence, Suho could guess the intentions of the creature who tried to corrupt Kang Taeshik's soul, the so-called 'old man'.

"Could it be that the Demonic Spirit Clan has been conducting experiments in this village? Like the Pyramid of Amut?"

Suho leaped between the tilting ground and buildings, observing the fleeing villains and he noticed the electronic anklets still on their legs.

"...Perhaps the one who helped the villains escape from Jisan Prison was also this Demonic Spirit."

The Pyramid of Amut was a place where countless challengers had willingly entered over the years, only to be captured by Amut and subjected to torture disguised as body reinforcement training, ultimately dying. The Item: 'Mummy's Bandage' was created through those countless experiments. And even after the bandage was made, many more died and turned into mummies unable to endure the training... Then what about this place?

[I think so too! Perhaps the Demonic Spirit Clan orchestrated the prison break to use the villains as test subjects for their research...!] But before Beru could finish his sentence. Something astonishing happened.

Rumble, rumble, rumble...!

Suho and Beru looked up at the gigantic hand casting a massive shadow over them as it appeared in the ominous sky, slowly descending towards them. Recognizing it, Kang Taeshik shouted urgently.

[That's the hand! The hand of the old man who tried to take me!] The skeletal arm that tried to snatch his soul had now manifested in the real world. This time, the target was once again Kang Taeshik's soul.

[Chuckle. I can't let such a delicious evil spirit slip away.] Kang Taeshik, even as a Shadow Soldier, shuddered at the old man's booming voice from the sky.

The Demonic Spirits' nature was to treat souls as playthings and he was the old man's new favorite toy. Of course, no one knew what would happen if Kang Taeshik, now a Shadow Soldier, were to be captured by that hand. But the moment the enemy revealed its true form. Suho immediately took action.

"Gray!"

"Woof!" At Suho's call, Gray came running from afar, leaping over the walls.

Gray had been relentlessly chasing and attacking the villains since they left the convenience store, and in stark contrast to his cute appearance, fur around his mouth and his fangs were stained with the blood.

[Kurrung! It's time to show your newfound power!] Beru, sensing Suho's intention, immediately used his skill.

[Beru uses Skill: 'Harsh Command'.]

[Skill: 'Harsh Command' increases Gray's stats by 50%.]

[As a side effect of Skill: 'Harsh Command,' Gray is afflicted with the 'Curse of Madness'.]

At that moment. Gray's eyes changed drastically.

"Growl...!"

But it didn't end there. With the sacred relic of the Fang Monarch, Item: 'Rakan's Fang', now residing within him. Gray was finally taking his first step as the true successor of Rakan.

Whoosh!

Gray's body, which had been running towards Suho, was enveloped in a divine silver light and began to slowly grow larger and larger. At the same time, Gray's expression, which had been that of a cute puppy, gradually turned ferocious, like that of a giant tiger. And as the power of 'Rakan's Fang' and 'Kasaka's Poison Fang' manifested within him.

"Roooooar!" Gray's bestial roar shook the world.

2

Suho quickly drank a potion to replenish his mana depleted from using the Blizzard of Frost. Then he leaped from the tilted ground and onto Gray's back, shouting,

2

"Gray! Charge!"

"Roooooar!"

With Suho on his back, Gray's thickened forelegs pushed off the slanted wall with tremendous force. Their target was the old man's giant hand.

[Skill: 'Iron Body Technique' activated.]

1

"Illusion or sorcery." Suho threw a punch, his fist enveloped in black energy.

"A man's gotta use his fists."

1

Kaboom!

A massive explosion erupted when his fist connected, shattering the old man's giant hand into pieces.

[This power, could it be...!] The old man's surprised cry echoed.

[The Iron Body Monarch?!]

1

CREATORS' THOUGHTS



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Solo Leveling: Ragnarok [FAN TL] Chapter 148 - Chapter 147

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Kwaarurung!

With a thunderous roar that reverberated through the sky, the giant old man's hand shattered like glass and crumbled. A moment later the distorted and twisted landscape of the village froze in place.

The villains, witnessing this awe-inspiring sight, gaped in astonishment.

"Wh-what is that?!"

"How could he so easily... break the old man's skill?!"

But while everyone was bewildered and frozen in shock.

"Get a grip, you bunch of cowards!" A stern shout suddenly rang out from behind them.

"A skill like that would have completely drained his mana! Don't just stand there, attack him all at once now!"

Hwang Dongsuk's words jolted the villains back to their senses. It was so obvious, an unchanging principle that the more powerful the skill, the more mana it required. A B-rank, no even an A-rank, would have exhausted all their mana using a skill of that magnitude. A sinister glint returned to the villains' eyes.

"Yeah! Let's go!"

"He's just one guy!"

"Uwaaaaaaaahaha!"

"That's right! Let's kill him!"

Even though most of them were lower ranks, as the villains gathered all their mana simultaneously, their sheer number created an intimidating aura that seemed to pierce the sky.

"That's right, you bastards! Don't forget we've taken High-Grade Stardust!" Hwang Dongsuk's spirited cry further fueled their morale.

Thud!

Gray, carrying Suho on his back, landed on the distorted ground. And the villains unleashed a barrage of attacks towards them.

"Kill him-!"

"Attack!"

Gray bit into the arm of the leading villain with his powerful fangs and shook his head violently.

"Aaack!"

The villain's body was flung backward faster than he charged in.

'Stardust?' Suho's eyes twitched at Hwang Dongsuk's words.

[My liege, his presence has vanished!] Beru glared at the sky where the old man's hand had disappeared.

"Yeah. Looks like he ran away." Suho nodded, recalling the sensation he felt when his fist connected. If he had killed him with that blow, a system message would have appeared so he was certain that the old man was still alive.

"He couldn't have gone far."

[I agree.] Beru, his eyes narrowed, surveyed the grotesquely distorted landscape of the village and said,

[If he had fled far away, this illusion wouldn't be maintained like this. He must be hiding nearby, waiting for an opportunity.]

[The beings of the Spirit Realm are inherently cowardly and cunning. Even during the Monarch's War, Yogmunt, the Monarch of Transfiguration, only hid behind other Monarchs, casting illusions and opening gates.] Beru was quick to explain the nature of the creatures he had encountered before.

[Dealing with the Demonic Spirit Clans, whether during the war or later, was always troublesome and annoying.]

"So, how did my father break their illusions?" Suho, recalling stories he's been by the shadow ant, asked Beru,

[Of course... with overwhelming strength.] Beru grinned and glanced at the black energy enveloping Suho's fist.

[No matter what tricks they used to obstruct him, he tore through them all with absolute power and conviction.]

Bam!

Suho slammed his fists together and grinned, revealing his teeth.

"I like it. Simple yet effective."

3

Then his gaze turned towards the countless villains charging at him. This was his first time fighting other humans, and to face so many at once... They weren't all weaklings either. It was a formidable force, with B-ranks and even A-ranks mixed in. Thanks to recruiting Kang Taeshik, who used stealth, as a Shadow Soldier, they had gained the upper hand in the initial skirmish, but his daggers couldn't pierce the defenses of B or A rank tankers. So on the surface, the situation seemed overwhelmingly disadvantageous for Suho. But for some reason...

'I don't feel like we're in any danger of losing.'

Outnumbered? With the ability to turn the dead into soldiers, being outnumbered was no longer a problem for him as his army would grow the longer he fought. But for now, he decided to hold back on that due to the Demonic Spirit who was likely still watching them, hidden somewhere.

'They could be in league with Itarim.' So Suho looked down at his shadow and spoke.

"Esil, come out for a bit."

Whoosh!

The demon noble, emerged from Suho's shadow.

"...Where are we this time? And you're dragging me out only to fight right away?" Esil looked at the horde of vicious humans charging towards them with a dumbfounded expression.

But that was only for a moment. She smirked and reached out her hand to the side, her eyes gleaming with a thirst for battle.

"I love this."

1

Swish!

A long spear materialized in Esil's hand. Demons were a warrior race, born into a life of constant struggle. For a demon noble, who stood at the pinnacle of their kind, battle was more precious than anything else in the world.

"Can I kill them all?"

She didn't wait for an answer. Esil's spear pierced the villains' hearts before they could even react.

"Krrr!"

Gray, not to be outdone, lunged forward, baring his ferocious fangs and tearing into the villains' limbs. Suho also drew Vulcan's Horns and grinned broadly.

"Alright, let's make some mayhem."

They were still vastly outnumbered.

But truly...

'I don't think we'll ever lose.'

[Skill: 'Bladestorm' is activated.]

Kwaaang!

A storm of blades erupted from Suho's twin swords, sweeping through the villains.

'My skills are way more effective when enemies are clustered together.' Suho disrupted the enemy's formation with his wide-area attack. While Gray fearlessly charged into the fray, using his massive body to slam into and crush the enemies, throwing their ranks

into disarray. And Esil, like a seasoned lancer, pierced the hearts of the panicked villains fleeing from Gray's onslaught. Their teamwork was reminiscent of a well-balanced raid party. Then, Esil tilted her head in confusion.

"What's this? Why are their heads falling off on their own?"

Splat!

Slash!

Thud! Gurgle!

For some time now, an unseen Shadow assassin had been continuously taking the villains' lives, hidden from sight.

"...You picked up an interesting one, didn't you?" Esil grinned joyfully, swinging her spear and shouting towards Suho.

"Suho! These guys, they may have the numbers, but they're all useless! They're just a bunch of kids who don't even know how to use their powers properly!"

Suho had also just realized that fact. Observing the movements of the Jisan Prison villains, he noticed that regardless of their mana rank or skills, they severely lacked combat experience.

It seemed that the villains fighting Suho and his companions were also starting to realize this reality.

"S-surrender!"

"We Surrender!"

"Please spare us!"

At that moment, those whose mana had run out began to raise their hands in surrender. More and more of them dropped their weapons and prostrated themselves on the ground, begging for their lives.

'...Look at this?' Suho, sensing the shift in the atmosphere, realized something intriguing.

He suddenly stopped in his tracks. Then, he roared fiercely at the villains surrounding him.

"Kneel !"

[Skill: 'Bloodlust' is activated.]

Some villains were able to resist this Bloodlust.

But what about this?

Suho unleashed an even more intense Bloodlust and shouted once more.

"Look around you! Your leader has abandoned you!"

"Hairy, that bastard... ?!" The villains were taken aback.

1

Meanwhile,

"Huff, huff, huff!" Hwang Dongsuk had pushed all his subordinates to the front lines and was now running in the opposite direction without hesitation.

'You idiots! Like that's gonna work!' He inwardly mocked the foolishness of his subordinates, who had easily fallen for his instigation.

'This is why those with no real-world experience lack common sense.'

People called Jisan Prison a notorious hellhole filled with the most vicious criminals, but to Hwang Dongsuk, who had reigned as king within those walls, it was all nonsense.

Villains?

The worst superhuman criminals?

'Bullshit.' Truthfully, despite being called villains, how many of them had actually fought anyone with their abilities?

'Most of them were caught by that Woo Jinchul bastard before they could even use their powers properly.'

Woo Jinchul was truly a formidable man. Somehow, he always seemed to know whenever the villains were about to commit a crime and would appear on the scene like a ghost, capturing them instantly. With the S-rank Choi Jong-in, even those able to escape were helplessly captured without putting up much of a fight. That's why Jisan Prison was a gathering place for villains who lacked real combat experience as Awakened beings.

"Because of that, the villains in Jisan Prison are severely lacking in practical experience as awakeners. They don't know how to properly utilize their skills, and they haven't developed the ability to gauge their opponents' strength."

"So they all fell for my nonsense about overwhelming them with numbers. Fools! Well, thanks to that, I've been able to take advantage of them until now."

But that was over.

'More than 50 of them are already dead.'

He had escaped with a whopping 500 people, and a tenth of their fighting force had been reduced overnight. Thinking positively, there were still nine-tenths left, but the reality wasn't so bright. Last night, about 300 people rebelled against him and left. In the end, only about 200 were following him, and he had lost 50 of them. Even now, more and more were losing their lives.

'There are only about 150 left. At this rate, they'll all be dead by the end of the day.'

It was a real headache. But to be honest, it was something he knew would happen eventually. The reason he was able to thrive as the kingpin in Jisan Prison was all thanks to his brother, Hwang Dongsoo. He was able to unite 500 prisoners and lead a successful breakout because of him as well. He had lied to all the villains in Jisan Prison to get them to escape.

"Once we break out, my brother will come find us soon!"

"Ooh! Does that mean we will become subordinates of an S-rank villain?"

"Of course, you idiots!"

S-rank villain Hwang Dongsoo would back them up. This lie moved the hearts of all the villains in Jisan Prison, and everyone participated in the breakout without exception.

But.

'There's no way that bastard Dongsoo would come to save me.'

Even two days after the noisy breakout, Hwang Dongsoo hadn't shown up in Pocheon. Anxiety began to sprout among the villains. They had taken such a big risk, trusting only in s-rank's villain help, but there was no sign of him coming... Their trust in Hwang Dongsuk started to crumble. The fact that Hwang Dongsuk's criminal record before becoming a villain was that of a swindler also played a part.

And finally, last night.

A group decided they wouldn't follow Hwang Dongsuk anymore and act independently. Hwang Dongsuk had no justification to stop them. No, he didn't even have the power. Without his brother's reputation, Hwang Dongsuk was nothing more than a C-rank villain.

'But it doesn't matter.'

Hwang Dongsuk with a meaningful smile opened the door to the hideout where the 'old man' was.

"Old man! We have a big problem... Huh!" His body froze.

Bzzzzt!

Inside, it wasn't just the old man. Countless bees were gathering, forming the shape of a woman.

CREATORS' THOUGHTS



Craftyprogamer

Solo Leveling: Ragnarok [FAN TL] Chapter 149 - Chapter 148

Chapter 149: Chapter 148

"Keuheok!"

Hwang Dongsuk collapsed on the spot in shock. But nobody paid him any attention.

"...Arsha, what did you just say?" The old man glared at the Queen Bee with piercing eyes.

Bzzzz!

The countless bees dispersed, revealing the alluring woman, Queen Bee Arsha. She met the old man's gaze and said,

[I said I'm pulling out.]

1

"Why? Don't tell me the great Queen Bee is scared?"

[Hmph. Scared...?] Arsha merely scoffed and crossed her arms at his provocation.

Her gaze drifted towards the window. Countless bees under her command were flying throughout the village. And even now, they were sending her strong warning signals.

Arsha smirked and retorted confidently, [Why not? It's the law of nature to flee and hide when faced with a predator you can't handle.]

"Predator? Are you that terrified by the power of the Iron Body? This wound is nothing to me." The old man's face contorted in displeasure, noticing Arsha's gaze fixed on his charred hand.

"Restoration." The old man chanted a spell and brushed off his blackened hand.

A ghostly, distorted face materialized from thin air, screaming as it merged with his hand. Then he flexed his perfectly healed hand and looked at Arsha with a relaxed gaze, trying to persuade her.

"Queen Bee Arsha, there might have been an unexpected turn of events, but it doesn't affect my plan. In fact, it's accelerating it."

[Even though the power of the Iron Body broke your illusion?]

"...It's true that the power of the Iron Body and the Demonic Spirits' illusions don't mix well. But that applies to them as well."

Tarnak, the Iron Body Monarch, was the king who ruled over goblins, orcs, and all other monstrous humanoids. His 'Iron Body Technique' was the power to train the body past its limits, ultimately transcending the soul's limitations. This Technique was capable of surpassing physical laws and striking even spirits. On the other hand, the Demonic Spirits' illusions used souls as their foundation to gain physical power. In other words, the illusions and the Iron Body Technique were powers situated at opposite ends of the spectrum.

"I was careless and the illusion was broken earlier, but that won't happen again. In fact, the intruder still hasn't found me and is wandering lost in the maze, isn't he?"

[And what if he eventually finds you?]

"So what if he does? I can just cast another illusion. They've already stepped into my domain, they can't escape."

[Can't escape...? Confidence is good, but is there truly anything impossible in this world? The mighty Monarchs, and even the absolute being were all killed.]

"Chuckle. That's what makes this world so wonderful." At Arsha's blatant mockery, the old man finally rose from his seat.

A frail and aged man. This body originally belonged to the 'head' of Yamri Village. But there was a reason he chose to possess this scrawny frame despite there being many other healthy humans in the village.

"I am Harmakan, the Grand Shaman of the Demonic Spirit Clan, and the next king." Harmakan grinned cruelly and raised his withered arms.

Kraaaaaaaaaaaaaa!

Then, agonizing screams echoed from the void. At Harmakan's fingertips, hazy specters writhed and screamed in pain. Witnessing this, Harmakan burst into a vile laughter.

"Look at this. Did you think a great Demonic Spirit like me would engage in a vulgar brawl with those fools who rely solely on physical strength?"

Hiccup...

Hwang Dongsuk, who had witnessed this scene while cowering in the corner, turned pale. Among the specters, he saw the faces of his subordinates who had just been killed by the intruder. His suspicion was correct. Harmakan's illusions were utilizing the souls of the humans who had perished in this village. Considering the number of people killed, it was no wonder he was so confident.

"Chuckle. A great Demonic Spirit always devises meticulous plans and fights from the shadows. There are plenty of pawns to send to the front lines, so no need to go there myself." Harmakan cackled, tormenting the translucent specters like toys with his bony fingers.

[...Tsk. I'm not sure who's more cowardly.] Arsha shook her head in disgust.

But Harmakan remained unfazed. "That would be you, trying to abandon the fight and run away. I'll give you one last chance. Stay and help me."

[No. If I had known 'he' would come here, I wouldn't have even approached this place.] The bees forming Arsha's body buzzed agitatedly, revealing her unease.

1

[...I don't have the power or the forces to face 'him' yet.]

Now Harmakan was curious. "Who is this 'he' that you fear so much? If he inherited the power of the Iron Body Monarch, aren't you the descendant of the Plague Monarch? Even I alone could handle him, but if we join forces, we could easily..."

[He's not the heir of the Iron Body Monarch, but the successor of the King of Beasts.]

5

"What? The Fang Monarch? What does that mean?" Harmakan was even more confused by Arsha's words.

The image of the giant wolf he was riding flashed through his mind at the mention of Rakan. If he was his successor, it wouldn't be strange for him to command such a large wolf. But there was something he couldn't understand.

"If he's the successor of the Fang Monarch, how can he wield the power of the Iron Body?"

[I don't know that either. But one thing's for sure. He's... much stronger than when I last met him.] Arsha bit her lip with a troubled expression.

Being soundly defeated by Suho not so long ago, she had no intention of confronting him again. Moreover, the situation was even more unfavorable now. She had lost all her lancers and was weakened, while Suho, whom she hadn't seen in a while, had grown even stronger.

[My plan to train new lancers with the villains here is no more. They're all going to die once he shows up.] With those final words, Arsha's body began to disperse into countless bees.

Then, as if she didn't even have time for further argument, she flew out the window. Harmakan scoffed at her gutless action, ridiculing her:

"...A coward like that, claiming to be Queresha's successor. It seems the Queen of Insects won't be appearing for a while." Harmakan nonchalantly rejected Arsha's qualifications for becoming a monarch.

"Good. That pesky fly trying to leech off my plan is gone. Now the souls here are all mine." Then, with a cold gaze he reached out his hand towards Hwang Dongsuk, who was cowering on the floor.

"...Keuheok?!" At his gesture, Hwang Dongsuk's body stiffened and floated into the air. Bound and helpless, the villain screamed in terror.

"O-old man! N-no, Master! What are you doing?! Our deal was...!"

"Chuckle. Oh yes, we had a deal." Harmakan's eyes gleamed with a sinister smile.

The reason he had approached Hwang Dongsuk, the kingpin of Jisan Prison, and instigated the mass breakout was simple.

"Our deal was that I help you control your subordinates outside the prison. And in return, I take the souls of those you killed."

"Y-yes! So why are you doing this to me?!"

"Why? You don't understand?" Harmakan tilted his head and asked Hwang Dongsuk, who was struggling in the air.

"You can lead your subordinates even after you're dead, can't you?"

"...Kuack!"

Crack! As Harmakan clenched his bony hand, Hwang Dongsuk's body crumpled in mid-air with a sickening crunch. Bones shattered, he coughed up blood and breathed his last.

1

Harmakan's eerie voice whispered to his soul, "Rejoice. I shall grant you the special privilege of becoming a Death Knight of the Demonic Spirit Clan."

Aaaaaaaaaaaaaa!

"I love wicked souls like yours." Harmakan savored Hwang Dongsuk's screams with a satisfied smile.

"Surrender! We surrender!"

"We'll go back to prison!"

"..." Esil was dumbfounded by the sight of the villains suddenly losing their will to fight and surrendering with their hands raised.

"What? Just like that? Shouldn't they put up at least a bit of a fight?"

"What can they do? Their leader ran away." Suho shrugged with a smirk.

But just because the villains surrendered didn't mean they were safe.

Spat!

Swish!

The invisible assassin's dagger mercilessly cut down the villains who had already lost their will to fight. Kang Taeshik, who loved killing above all else, found the surrendering villains to be even easier targets.

[That's quite something.] Beru nodded approvingly as he watched the shadow soldier eliminate villains.

[He's not just killing indiscriminately, he's targeting those with a stronger scent of blood.]

"The scent of blood? You mean he's killing only those who've actually taken people's lives?"

[...Yes, that's correct.]

Suddenly, Kang Taeshik reappeared before Suho and bowed his head.

[I apologize. That last one was a bit ambiguous, but I thought it was better to kill him.]

"..."

"..."

Suho and Esil exchanged glances, silently observing Kang Taeshik. The demon noble mouthed some words to him.

'He's scaring me a bit.'

'Aren't you supposed to be the monstrous demon here...?' Suho responded with his eyes.

"...!"

Buzz-

Swish!

Without a warning Suho's hand shot into the air, grabbing something.

"Well, well, well?" Suho smirked, looking at the struggling bee in his hand. But his eyes weren't smiling.

[The King of Insects, the Plague Monarch, is pleased.]

"Come out, Arsha." At Suho's words, the bee in his hand trembled.



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Solo Leveling: Ragnarok [FAN TL] Chapter 150 - Chapter 149

Chapter 150: Chapter 149

Bzzzz-

A cluster of bees descended from the sky and coalesced into one on Suho's palm. Queen Bee Arsha. The moment she appeared, she placed a hand on her chest, bowed slightly, and greeted him.

[It's been a while, Sung Suho. How have you been?]

"You've gotten smaller."

At Suho's words, Arsha smiled bitterly and replied [Yes. My main body has already left this village.]

Currently, Arsha was floating before Suho, the size of a doll.

[This is just a clone I created by gathering the remaining scout bees.]

"Scout?"

[Kieek! So you were in league with the Demonic Spirit Clan after all!] Beru immediately grabbed Arsha's waist with his strong claws.

Because of her small size, Beru looked enormous in comparison. Intimidated by the shadow ant ferocious aura, Arsha hurriedly replied, [N-no. I did consider it for a while, but we parted ways a short while ago because our goals didn't align.]

"Parted ways?"

[Yes. I had no intention of being hostile towards you, Sung Suho...]

"What? Are You one of Queresha's spawn?!" Esil's eyes widened at Arsha's sudden appearance.

But the one more surprised here was Queen Bee herself. Held in Beru's grasp, she looked at Esil and let out a small gasp.

[...I couldn't believe it when I saw you from afar, but you really are a demon noble. It's an honor to meet you.]

"Hmm hmm. Yes, it's an honor." Esil responded to Arsha's polite greeting, trying to suppress a smirk.

Then, with her nose held high, she introduced herself dignifiedly. "I am Esil, the eldest daughter of the Radiru family. And you are?"

[Ah, the great Radir family... I am Queen Bee Arsha.]

"...What are you two doing?" Suho looked at them with a dumbfounded expression.

Arsha felt a chill seeing how close Suho and Esil seemed.

'To think there was still a living demon noble.' That meant this demon in front of her had a high probability of becoming the next Demon King.

And such a powerful being was now an ally of Sung Suho, the successor of the Fang Monarch. No, wait, how did he even manage to gain the power of the Iron Body...?

2

'I can't even begin to comprehend what's going on.'

Moreover, it was quite the coincidence that so many different races gathered in this small, remote village. And the fact that she was currently the weakest among them made Arsha feel even more uneasy.

'This village was more trouble than it was worth.' She regretted ever setting foot here in the first place.

In any case, there was only one option left for her in this situation. To grovel. Even though her main body had already left, she had to avoid incurring Suho's wrath as much as possible, in case she encountered him again someday.

[Sung Suho, I truly did nothing but scout in this village. I swear.] Arsha pleaded her innocence earnestly.

And she began to honestly recount what had happened to her. [After 'that day,' I've been wandering around, trying to find places where you weren't present. But it turned out to be more challenging than I thought....]

The problem started when Suho suddenly decided to become a guild master and started raiding dungeons all over the country to gain experience. Whether by coincidence or misfortune, Suho would always plan a raid near wherever Arsha moved

to. For him, it was just a one-day visit, but she had to hurriedly leave the area, to avoid being detected. Eventually, Arsha couldn't take it anymore and made up her mind. She would leave for another country where Suho wasn't present. However, the Korean peninsula was surrounded by the sea on three sides. And it was impossible for bees to cross the Pacific or the Atlantic with their tiny wings.

[...Stowing away on a plane was out of the question as well... These days, security is very tight to prevent villains from sneaking in.]

With those constraints, Arsha was left with only one option. North Korea.

1

[...I was simply heading north to reach the border. And that's when I encountered Harmakan preparing the great escape.]

"Harmakan?"

[Yes. The Grand Shaman of the Demonic Spirit Clan, Harmakan. He was in the middle of executing his plan to use the villains from Jisan Prison in order to increase his power, and he asked me to help with reconnaissance.]

[So you did help him...!] With these words Beru tightened his grip on her waist.

Arsha hurriedly continued. [At first, I only helped a little, thinking it was a plan to use villains who deserved to die! If I had known it would escalate to this, I would never have taken part in it.]

Arsha felt genuinely wronged. To make matters worse, she had first met Suho in the middle of resolving the previous villain situation. If another villain incident occurred with her participating, she couldn't help but worry that Suho might come looking for her.

[Initially, Harmakan told me he only planned to use the souls of the villains from Jisan Prison as ingredients for his magic.]

Arsha had readily accepted the offer, thinking that Suho wouldn't care if some villains died, as long as there were no civilian casualties. What Harmakan wanted from her was to scout the situation inside the prison and track the movements of the escaped villains.

[He promised to give me a few villains to turn into new lancers in exchange for my help with reconnaissance. But it didn't really go as planned...]

Arsha had assumed Harmakan would kill all the villains as soon as they escaped. She planned to save a few of them, feed them Royal Jelly, and modify them into the new Queen Bee Lancers. But that plan went out the window the moment the villains staged a mass breakout.

[Harmakan prefers souls tainted with evil.] Harmakan wanted to further corrupt them to make his magic circle even more powerful.

And that was quite simple. Since Hwang Dongsuk was an extremely greedy man, all it took was a little persuasion for him to do the deed himself. Led astray by their leader, villains as soon as they managed to escape decided to conquer the nearby village. And truly taste their newfound freedom. The result was truly horrific. The moment Awakened individuals with superhuman abilities were freed from the constraints of the law. Everything turned into living hell.

[This village was already saturated with Harmakan's sorcery. And that magic further fueled the villains' desires.] Listening to Arsha, Suho's gaze shifted to the side.

The surviving villains, who had surrendered, were avoiding his eyes in shame. They were momentarily distracted by Arsha's appearance, but as she revealed their past sins, a sense of impending doom dominated their thoughts. Of course, these villains hadn't been killed by the Shadow Assassin Kang Taeshik, which meant they hadn't directly participated in the massacre in the village. But they definitely did wreak havoc, and the only reason they hadn't killed anyone was because they were occupying the nearby restaurants and bars, devouring food and alcohol they had been deprived of in prison.

Swoosh.

[Should I kill them all?] The villains paled as they saw the Shadow Assassin raise his dagger, having sensed Suho's gaze.

1

"No, wait." Suho raised his hand to stop Kang Taeshik.

"Don't kill anyone from now on."

[...Yes.] Kang Tae-shik lowered his dagger with a sad expression but not daring to object at his master's firm command.

2

But Suho's order to stop the slaughter wasn't out of pity for the villains. "It seems the more people die in this village, the stronger the Demonic Spirit's sorcery becomes."

[That's right. As expected of Sung Suho, you're truly amazing. You grasped how Harmakan's magic circle works in an instant!] Arsha couldn't help but be impressed by Suho's words.

The Demonic Spirit Clan's wicked sorcery, which treated souls like playthings, was a complex magic that other races couldn't easily comprehend. Even Arsha only knew

about it because Harmakan had told her; she couldn't have figured it out just by observing.

But for Suho, it wasn't difficult. Since a while ago, unfamiliar system messages had been appearing above the corpses of the dead villains.

[Shadow extraction is impossible due to the absence of a soul.]

[Shadow extraction is impossible due to the absence of a soul.]

[Shadow extraction is impossible due to the absence of a soul.]

The missing souls had probably been taken by Harmakan. Arsha's story about Harmakans plan to use the villains as ingredients for his magic circle was only a confirmation. Putting all these pieces together was easy, He concluded that the more deaths occurred in this place, the stronger Harmakan's sorcery became.

"Sung Suho, I can easily guide you out of this village. Just trust me," The quick-witted Arsha offered to show Suho an escape route. No matter how strong Harmakan's illusion was, Arsha was the one who had helped him hide his main body.

But...

"No thanks." Suho firmly rejected her offer. It wasn't that he didn't trust her.

"In times like these, you have to face the enemy head-on." Suho's eyes gleamed as he looked ahead.

The Death Knights sent by Harmakan were already approaching.

Thump! Thump! Thump! Thump!

Empty suits of armor were walking towards them. The ominous aura emanating from within their 'bodies' sent chills down the spines of everyone looking at them.

"Wh-what are those?!" The villains who had surrendered to Suho paled at the sight of the overwhelming force.

In stark contrast to them. Suho felt no fear, only excitement.

[Death Knight]

[Death Knight]

The enemies had name tags floating above their heads. Seeing this, he couldn't help but grin.

"Harmakan... You're unexpectedly helpful."

[That's quite considerate.] Beru also chuckled darkly, following Suho's lead.

Suho glanced at Esil, and she immediately retreated, understanding his signal. She was not to interfere from now on.

"...Turning the souls of worthless villains who don't even give experience into monsters." Suho chuckled meaningfully, raised his twin swords, and charged forward with Gray.

4

It was time to level up.

Kwaarururung! At that moment Harmakan's giant hands erupted from the ground, picking up entire buildings and swinging them at Suho.

Rumble!

"That's an interesting trick." Suho chose to face it head-on.

CREATORS' THOUGHTS



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