

Solo Leveling: Ragnarok [FAN TL] Chapter 191 - Chapter 190

Chapter 191: Chapter 190

[Rules of the Cartenon Temple]

4

1. Thou shall worship God.
2. Thou shall praise God.
3. Thou shall prove thy faith.
4. Those who fail to obey these commandments shall not be spared.

Ding!

[Itarim's Blessing: 'Rules of the Carteon Temple' activated.]

"...!"

Suddenly, the air in the chapel changed drastically.

[Little Monarch! This energy... it's that of the Itarim...!]

[It's a trap! It seems this place is...!]

But before Beru's and Esil's urgent voices could finish.

"Praise Itarim!" Along with Kim Chul's booming voice, a grotesque chorus erupted from the mouths of the Cult members in the chapel.

[...It seems like a place where they sacrifice those who aren't followers of the Outer Gods!]

"Worship and revere!"

"Prove your faith!"

Ding! Ding! Ding! System messages appeared one after another before Suho's eyes.

[Itarim's blessing restricts the mana of non-believers.]

Whoosh! An unknown force suppressed Suho's magic power.

[Itarim's blessing permits the use of mana to those who have proven their faith.]

1

[Itarim's blessing grants divine power to those who have proven their faith.]

"Kill Vulcan!"

Ah, Aaaaaaaaah - At Kim Chul's command, all the Outer Gods' Cult members, with bright smiles on their faces, launched a concentrated attack on Suho.

Boom! Boom! Boom! Boom!

"Hahaha! A demon noble walked right into our trap!"

"Even Vulcan himself is nothing but a sacrifice when his mana is sealed...!"

Punch! At that moment.

"...?!"

The Cult member who charged at the forefront had his jaw dislocated by Suho's sudden punch.

Bang! His body was flung back faster than he had charged, crashing into the wall.

1

"...!"

The eyes of all the Outer Gods' Cult members, including Kim Chul, widened in shock.

[Tenacity Lv.7]

5

There stood Suho, grinning, completely unharmed.

"Well, I've confirmed that Grandpa isn't here..."

Crack. He clenched his fists and stepped forward scanning the faces of the cultists who had attacked him, eyes burning with rage.

"Now I'll kill you and then ask questions!"

Bang! Suho's figure shot forward, kicking off the ground. Even with his mana sealed, he still had skills that didn't consume magic power. And the stats directly engraved into his body, along with the Vulcan's Horns he was already equipped with, were no exception!

[Effect: 'Destruction desire': Increases physical damage by 300%.]

Crash!

"Ack!"

The Outer Gods' Cult members were sent flying in all directions like fallen leaves. Once Suho went on a rampage, nothing could stand in his way. Kim Chul even stepped forward himself.

"Khahaha! You struggle quite a bit! As expected of a demon noble, you make a fine sacrifice!"

Flash! He channeled blue energy from the Star Piece on his forehead and swung a large shield towards Vulcan.

Whoosh - Bang!

Fist and shield collided. A tremendous shockwave spread out in all directions. As their gazes met in mid-air.

'He's not at the level of an ordinary A-rank!'

'Is this truly the power of a demon noble?!'

But that was only for a moment.

'I'll crush you!'

Suho's fierce attacks followed, raining down like shotgun blasts.

"Ugh...!" Kim Chul gritted his teeth and endured everything while swinging the sword with his other hand.

Suho immediately grabbed the Vulcan's Horns attached to his head with both hands and swung them forward.

Clang!

In an instant, the two Horns transformed into swords and sliced through the air.

'Ruler's Authority!' This skill didn't consume mana so the weapons shot out from Suho's hands.

"N-no!"

Kim Chul's eyes widened, and he stumbled backward. Every time he dodged Suho's attacks, other Outer Gods' Cult members were mercilessly slaughtered in his place.

1

"Kaaagh!" Believers caught in the attacks coughed up blood and died. But that moment, something surprising happened.

Flash!

The Star Pieces embedded in the foreheads of the fallen began emitting blue energy. It streamed out and enveloped their bodies, then ignited into blue flames.

Whoosh! A blue demonic energy took control of the corpses and raised them like puppets.

"Mist Burn?"

No... It was similar to Mist Burn, but different. The Outer Gods' Cult members were being controlled by the Star Pieces even in death.

"Kaaagh!"

The corpses, bound by the blue demonic energy, flew through the air and attacked Suho.

[Little Monarch! You have to attack the Star Pieces themselves!] Beru and Esil shouted.

[It seems they are the medium connecting Itarim and these guys!]

"They are using them like a kind of possessed priest." Suho's eyes flashed as he said those words.

"...Like me."

At that moment.

[The King of Beasts and the Monarch of Fangs, licks his lips.]

The Queen of Insects and the Monarch of Plagues, raises her eyes.]

[The King of the Snow Folk and the Monarch of Frost, is watching you.]

Even though his mana was sealed, it had no effect on the souls of the Monarchs who were already dead and wandering the sea of the afterlife.

Just as the energy of Itarim, existing far away in the outer universe, empowered the Cult members through the Star Pieces.

"Come out, Gray. Esil."

Fwoosh!

"Growl!" At that moment, a giant wolf enveloped in silver light burst out from Suho's shadow and struck the enemies.

Slash! Esil, who had been residing in Vulcan's Horn, also emerged and swung her spear at them.

"Wh-what's this, all of a sudden?!"

Kim Chul couldn't help but be flustered as the number of Suho's allies suddenly increased.

[Iron, come quickly.]

1

"...?!" At that moment, a whispering voice came from behind him. He shuddered and hurriedly turned around, but there was nothing there.

'A-a ghost?!'

Kim Chul was startled and turned back around, readjusting his posture. But why?

'C-come quickly?'

He wanted to go. Wherever that place was.

'What is this feeling?!'

He was confused. So confused! His subconscious was welcoming that ghostly voice!

"E-everyone, snap out of it! There are only a few of them! For the glory of Itarim!" Suppressing his instincts, Kim Chul shouted at his followers as if talking to himself.

"For Itarim!"

They raised their voices and mustered all their strength.

"We are willing to die!"

"For Itarim!"

"Even if we live it's..."

"For Itarim!".I

"Even in death, we shall become servants of Itarim!"

"Kill Vulcan! With the blood of a demon noble, we can create a massive amount of Star Pieces!"

The living Outer Gods' Cult members and those controlled by Star Pieces while already dead joined forces to attack Suho. But despite being vastly outnumbered, He only smiled, lips curling upwards as he spoke.

"Come out, all of you."

He might not be able to use mana, but so what? All of his Shadow skills didn't consume mana anyway.

[Skill: 'Monarch's Domain' activated.]

[The stats of Shadow Soldiers fighting within the caster's shadow are increased by 50%.]

Fwoosh! Suho's shadow spread out in all directions, centering around him. And from within it, the Shadow Soldiers who followed him rose.

"Scatter and destroy the Star Pieces!"

[Yes, Master!]

Screeeech! Que, faster than anyone else, transformed into a spear and pierced through the enemies.

Crack! Shatter!

"Kuh?!"

As his spear pierced through the Star Pieces embedded in the cultists' foreheads, blue light scattered into dust. Along with it, the Itarim's energy that controlled them dissipated, and their bodies collapsed on the spot.

"W-what is this?!" Kim Chul, the priest who had been leading them, panicked and stumbled around in confusion.

"Itarim! Save us! Save us... Save us...?"

But then.

'...What is this feeling?' Something was strange. Very strange...

[Skill, 'Monarch's Domain' is activated.]

From the moment an ominous shadow filled the entire chapel where the battle was taking place. From the moment Kim Chul stood on his shadow. For some reason, he had to desperately resist the instinct to run to Vulcan, kneel before him, and bow his head.

'Why, why?! What's happening?! Could it be that this demon noble Vulcan brainwashed me?' If that was right, it is a truly demonic trick!

"Kaaagh! How dare you try to bewitch me, a priest who serves the great gods! Do you think I'll fall for it?!"

Kim Chul gritted his teeth and charged towards Suho. He focused all his strength into one point.

"Die! Vulcan!"

[Iron.]

"Ah, who's there?!" At the ghostly voice whispering behind him once again, Kim Chul shouted and swung his arm backward. And there, a real ghost stood! A black shadow. An ant-like evil spirit was grinning at him with a cruel smile.

[Come quickly.]

1

Crack!

"...!" That was the last thing Kim Chul saw before he died.

[Hmm. Why did such a strong person get distracted in the middle of a fight? Well, I am fast, but still.] Que, who had pierced through the back of his head and shattered the Star Piece, tilted his head in wonder.

Beru looked down at Kim Chul's corpse and chuckled. [He must have missed the Monarch's Domain so much. Little Monarch! Quickly, extract Iron's...]

Suho had already arrived in front of Kim Chul's corpse.

[Shadow Extraction is possible on this target.]

'Was he one of my father's soldiers?' Perhaps because of that, Kim Chul's shadow was already writhing even before Suho got close. As if it was about to rise on its own, without even needing extraction.

"Hmm. Rise?"

2

[Shadow Extraction successful.]

[Khahahahahaha] - As soon as Suho finished speaking, Kim Chul's shadow swirled and sprang up.

[Khahahaha! I'm back!]

[Kieeeeek! You're finally back, Iron!]

9

[Khahahaha! I remember everything! All my memories are back!]

[Kihahahaha!]

Kim Chul burst into laughter with Beru as soon as he became a Shadow. He suddenly turned his head towards Suho. Having once served Sung Jinwoo, he instinctively knew Suho's relationship with him

[Little Monarch. My new master...]

But at that moment.

Shiver!

"...!" Suho's Sense stat sent a warning. And as he turned his head in that direction with a fearful expression. The two eyes of the giant statue sitting on the chair at the far end of the chapel were staring at him.

2

[Watch out...!] Before Iron could finish his urgent warning, Suho instinctively twisted his body to the side. Almost simultaneously, blue beams shot out from both eyes of the statue.

2

Ziiing! They narrowly missed him and caused massive explosions.

Boom! Boom! Boom! Boom! Boom! Boom!

The blue beams swept through the area, melting the bodies of the Outer Gods' Cult members who were there.

"Uaaaaaaaaaagh!"

"Ack!"

Only the grotesque remnants were left after the beams had passed. The screams came not from them, but from the other believers who witnessed their demise.

"I guess he's not a very merciful god." Suho sneered and glared ahead. The statue, which had just killed the believers who were praying before it, was now smiling brightly at Suho.

It was a cruel smile.

4

[To think I'd witness the Shadow Authority in a place like this.] A grotesque, echoing voice flowed from the statue's mouth. The emotion felt from that voice was clear killing intent towards Suho! And a distinct appetite, as if it had found a delicious meal right before its eyes.

[How pathetic. Getting cocky just because you killed one measly priest.] The statue of Itarim mocked Suho and spoke.

[But I have plenty of priests who serve me. Ones far more powerful than that.] It smiled meaningfully and turned its head...

Rumble! One side of the chapel walls crumbled under the blue beam. Beyond it, a gate was hidden, blue mist billowing out from it.

[Come forth, High Priest.]

At those words, a silhouette slowly emerged from within the gate.

Gasp! [This is bad!]

Iron, who had just become Suho's Shadow Soldier, suddenly recalled his memories from when he was still alive and shouted at Suho. [The High Priest of the Outer Gods' Cult is the S-rank villain, Hwang Dongsoo! Formerly known as Greed in the shadow army]

5

"...!"

At those words, Suho and Beru's expressions hardened. Why was Hwang Dongsoo appearing here all of a sudden?! And as the High Priest of Itarim, no less! With the power of the Star Piece added to his already S-rank Awakened abilities, his strength would undoubtedly be tremendous.

Thud!

[Khahahaha!] Along with the statue's maniacal laughter, Hwang Dongsoo finally emerged from the gate.

But.

"...?!"

He wasn't walking out on his own. He was being dragged out by the hand of a white-haired old man.

7

CREATORS' THOUGHTS



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Solo Leveling: Ragnarok [FAN TL] Chapter 192 - Chapter 191

Chapter 192: Chapter 191

[...Huh?] It was the first time the statue's expression, which had been fixed in a wicked smile, faltered.

Hwang Dongsoo. He was a High Priest the Outer Gods' Cult had painstakingly brainwashed, a human with S-rank power. Corrupting the soul of someone like that was

an extremely difficult and tedious task. First, they had to build a relationship by slowly giving him missions he wouldn't suspect. Then, when they felt his suspicions had subsided, they entrusted him with the distribution of Stardust necklaces and Star Pieces, gradually tainting him with Itarim's divine power. And after much time and effort, they finally succeeded in making him the High Priest. The S-rank, Hwang Dongsoo, was the result of such arduous work.

'...But why?' Why was their painstakingly crafted High Priest being dragged out like this?!

[How...!]

Rumble! Rumble...!

The statue of Itarim was enraged beyond comparison to when Kim Chul died, rising from its chair. But the answer to the statue's question came not from the old man dragging Hwang Dongsoo, but from Suho's mouth.

"...G-Grandpa?"

"Hmm?" At Suho's voice, Sung Il-Hwan's indifferent expression brightened, and he looked at him.

"Well, well, who do we have here? What's my grandson doing here?"

The reason why the father of the Shadow Monarch, Sung Jinwoo, regained the memories from his past life was a 'dream'.

* * *

That dream again.

At first, he dismissed it as a location he had seen in a movie. It was just a fragmented scene, and the content was nothing more than a childish dream of him fighting monsters. Even those few fragments of the dream would mostly disappear by the time he woke up and had his morning coffee. Vanishing without a trace... Well, that's how dreams usually were. But no matter how carefully you use an eraser, if you rub too much, traces will remain on the paper.

That dream again.

At some point, the scenes from that dream wouldn't disappear from Sung Il-Hwan's mind even after morning came and afternoon arrived. Still, he didn't pay much attention to it. It was just a dream, after all. But there was one thing that bothered him. Why is Jinwoo... Sung Il-Hwan's son always appeared in his dreams. Especially on days when

he talked or did something with him in reality. He would always have 'that dream' when he fell asleep.

– Did you not miss me, Father?

His son, Sung Jinwoo, would be looking at him with a resentful gaze. And the following words would always come out of his mouth.

– I missed you, always.

1

And Sung Il-Hwan would caress the face, which was right in front of him. Tears streaming from his son's eyes would wet the back of his hand. The tears were so hot that... Even though he knew it was a dream, it hurt so much.

– You grew up well. Even though this father had done nothing for you... – At those words, Sung Jinwoo would express a terrifyingly heavy anger and ask,

– The Rulers? Are those guys using and discarding you, Father?

The Rulers. He didn't know who they were, but Sung Il-Hwan shook his head.

– They merely gave me a choice. I chose to protect you, and that choice wasn't wrong in the slightest. – As he answered and caressed his son's face, his hand started to crumble and scatter like ashes.

– I wanted to talk to you more. I wanted to be with you a little longer. – But in the end, he made Jinwoo erase his father from his heart twice.

Tears streamed down Sung Il-Hwan's eyes, which he had tried so hard to hold back.

– I'm sorry for not being a good father. – With those words.

1

Rustle. Sung Il-Hwan's entire body turned to ashes. Even while scattering like gray dust, he could see it. His son's expression as he approached to embrace the crumbling body of his incompetent father. The terrible anger contained in his eyes.

– Uaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaah!

Then, the mana in the atmosphere vibrated. The sky, the air, the ground, all wept.

– Do you hear me, Monarchs! You will pay for what you did today!

The enraged Shadow Monarch's roar shook heaven and earth.

* * *

'...Shadow Monarch?'

That day. Sung Il-Hwan woke up in his bed, pressed his forehead, and sighed.

'Oh, dear...'

And so he recalled the memories from his past life that he had forcibly erased to enjoy an ordinary life with his son. In retrospect, perhaps it was inevitable. Sung Jinwoo, had already become a being far superior to the Rulers he had asked to erase his memories. From that perspective, it was perhaps inevitable, not coincidental, that his memories returned as he constantly interacted with such a son.

And as always. There was meaning in everything. Not long after Sung Il-Hwan remembered his past life. Sung Jinwoo disappeared. Just like he had disappeared long ago, to fight a lonely war alone. And then the Cataclysm occurred. Has Earth turned back to how it was then? Seeing the gates and dungeon breaks that had begun anew, Sung Il-Hwan couldn't hide his bitterness. But unfortunately, there was nothing he, an old man, could change.

No, actually, there was something he could do if he put his mind to it. Even old he still had mana just like before. But Sung Il-Hwan had no intention of making the same mistakes. The voice of his son, who always looked at him with resentment in his dreams, was deeply engraved in his mind.

– Are you going to leave without a word again, Father?

'No way. I can't repeat my errors.' Sung Il-Hwan made his choice.

Long ago, as soon as he awakened his mana, he became a Hunter and jumped into dungeons without hesitation. For the noble mission of sacrificing himself to save the world, and for the wealth and glory that followed.

'But this time, I'll protect my family.'

In this life, even after awakening his mana, Sung Il-Hwan remained by his wife's side. Protecting the world was for the young. He chose to grow old peacefully with his beloved and spend the rest of their life together.

...Of course, he occasionally used fishing as an excuse to clean up simple dungeons close to his house. And that's how he discovered the black market that had appeared nearby. At first, Sung Il-Hwan only intended to take a quick look around. But the moment he stepped inside he discovered the statue of Itarim within.

[Covetous soul.]

'...!' A grotesque voice pierced Sung Il-Hwan's mind.

Ziiiiing - Boom!

Sung Il-Hwan approached Suho, narrowly dodging the blue beam that shot out from the statue's eyes.

"Grandpa! What are you doing here?!"

"Huh, what are you talking about? What are you doing here?"

"I'm here for you, of course...!"

Suho's eyes widened as he saw Sung Il-Hwan up close. Countless Star Pieces were embedded all over his body. Dozens of them, compared to Kim Chul and the other Outer Gods' Cult members who only had one on their foreheads!

"Grandpa, what is this...?"

"Ah, this? I almost got caught and had to undergo some modifications."

"Inventory!" Suho immediately opened his inventory and took out a bunch of Item: 'Spring Water of the Echo Forest.' Dodging the giant foot of the statue of Itarim that was descending from above to crush them, he shoved the potion bottles into Sung Il-Hwan's mouth.

"Drink this first!"

1

"Oof!" Gulp gulp!

He hurriedly drank the detoxification potion. But even in this urgent situation, he seemed quite happy to be talking to his grandson after a long time.

"This tastes awful. Is it good for you?"

"Now's not the time for jokes!"

Suho struck down the fanatics attacking from the side and escaped Itarim's range with Sung Il-Hwan. An enraged voice erupted from the statue towards Sung Il-Hwan.

[You insignificant mortal! High Priest, rise!]

Flash!

At that moment, a blue aura surged from Hwang Dongsoo's collapsed body, and he floated into the air. Like Suho's grandfather, he had dozens of Star Pieces embedded all over his body.

[How did you escape the power of our divinity?!]

"Insignificant?" Sung Il-Hwan smirked at the statue's words.

"It seems you don't understand the meaning of insignificant."

He tapped the dozens of Star Pieces embedded in his body and said, "You think you can brainwash me with these pebbles?"

2

Boom! The statue's attack shattered the ground where he stood.

"Kaaaaaagh!" Hwang Dongsoo, having lost his sanity, also flew towards them and attacked. The blue energy he emitted exploded, causing another one of the chapel walls to crumble.

Sung Il-Hwan lightly evaded and spread his arms wide. Then, surprisingly, the dozens of Star Pieces embedded all over his body also emitted streaks of blue energy and enveloped him.

Flash!

The aura gathered in Sung Il-Hwan's hands had transformed into blue daggers. He wielded them as if he had been doing nothing else all his life.

Swish! Swish! Swish!

The blue energy slashed through the air, attacking the statue and Hwang Dongsoo.

[How dare you-! A non-believer without any reverence for the god tries to use divine power!] The statue of Itarim became even more enraged and shot blue beams from its eyes.

2

At that moment.

"Grandpa!"

Boom! Suho struck the statue's leg with all his might.

[...] Its balance faltered, and the direction of the blue beams twisted away from Sung Il-Hwan.

"Oh my, look how much my grandson has grown." Sung Il-Hwan grinned, proud of Suho whom he hadn't seen in a long time.

"Just like his father."

"Grandpa." Suho cut off Sung Il-Hwan's playful remark and looked ahead with a serious gaze.

"Can you follow my instructions?"

His lips curled upwards. "Always."

At that moment, Sung Il-Hwan's eyes, fixed on the statue, also turned sharp, just like Suho's. Who charged towards the statue with all his might.

[How dare you!]

Ziiiiing-

The statue's blue beam narrowly missed his head.

"Haaaah!" Suho raised his fist. But didn't attack the statue, he struck the chapel floor where it was standing.

Boom!

[...] The statue's balance wavered for a moment.

"Now!" As if waiting for those words, Sung Il-Hwan appeared before the statue.

Flash!

Blue light exploded.

Ding!

[Itarim's Blessing: 'Rules of the Cartenon Temple' deactivated.]



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Solo Leveling: Ragnarok [FAN TL] Chapter 193 - Chapter 192

Chapter 193: Chapter 192

Rumble! Rumble! Rumble! Blue energy swirled violently.

"This meager power! I shall return it to you!"

Star Pieces. Dozens of Outer Gods jewels were forcibly implanted into Sung Il-Hwan's body. The mana of the outer universe, emanating from them, condensed into two daggers in his hands and exploded.

[How dare you-!]

2

Ziiiiing - The blue beam shooting from the enraged statue's eyes split the wall in half.

[You insignificant mortal-!]

Rumble! Crash!

The chapel began to collapse under the statue's extreme rage. But that no longer mattered. The Debuff: 'Rules of the Cartenon Temple' that had been controlling the chapel was broken.

Whoosh! Finally, the force that had been restricting Suho's mana disappeared.

"Good." His eyes gleamed ominously, gaze meeting Sung Il-Hwan's, who was blocking the statue from above, in mid-air.

Silent words were exchanged... 'Now, show me.'

How much he had grown! Despite the sudden turn of events, Sung Il-Hwan had grasped quite a lot the moment he saw Suho. How could he not? He was the father who raised Sung Jinwoo, the most extraordinary person. And even if no one acknowledged him, he was a warrior who fought alone to protect his son in secrecy. Therefore...

'No explanations are needed.' Sung Il-Hwan could already see it clearly.

'Show me your strength.'

The great shadow beneath Suho's feet, connected to the deep darkness.

'Show me how deep is your darkness!'

How much his grandson, whom he always thought of as a child, had grown!

"Arise!" Suho's command fell.

Fwoosh!

[Shadow Extraction successful.]

[Shadow Extraction successful.]

[Shadow Extraction successful.]

At his forceful command, new Shadow Soldiers rose from the corpses of the Outer Gods' Cult members who had been melted by the statue's beams.

[Shadow Fanatic Lv.1]

[Shadow Fanatic Lv.1]

[Shadow Fanatic Lv.1]

Kyaaaaaaaaaaaaa!

The new soldiers, brought back from death, were truly demonic. They radiated intense hatred for the false god who had exploited and betrayed their blind faith during their lives.

"All forces, charge."

Charge! At Suho's command, the Shadow Army roared in unison and surged towards the statue of Itarim.

[The stats of Shadow Soldiers fighting within the caster's shadow are increased by 50%.] The Monarch's Domain amplified their power.

[Khahahaha! Despicable Outer God! I'll crush you!] Kim Chul, who had been the most zealous follower in life, now led the charge towards the statue.

[You're back, Iron!] Beru cheered and commanded the battlefield from above Kim Chul, or rather, Iron's head.

Rumble! The statue's giant foot mercilessly crushed the Shadow Soldiers.

[Harman uses Skill: 'Thorn of Pain'.]

[Harman uses Skill: 'Damage Amplification'.]

Boom! Suho also unleashed all his power.

[Skill: 'Iron Body Technique' activated.]

'Skill: 'Giant's Armor' activated.]

[The spirit of Pet: 'Gray' possesses the Priest's body.]

[Skill: 'Grasslands Wind' activated.]

[Movement speed temporarily increased by 30%.]

[Attack speed temporarily increased by 30%.]

Fwoosh!

Suho's body grew larger, and his hair, now silver, fluttered like a lion's mane.

"Huh." Sung Il-Hwan couldn't help but be surprised by Suho's transformed appearance. When did his small grandson grow so big...?

2

[Skill: 'Storm Slash' activated.]

Rumble!

The storm of blades swirling from Suho's swords was just as powerful as his appearance, fiercely attacking the statue.

"Uaaagh!"

"Run...!"

As the chapel crumbled, the remaining Cult members scattered in panic. And the demons outside were also bewildered.

[My servants! Fight!]

Whoosh! Their expressions, which had been filled with confusion, changed at the statue's roar. They had long lost their original selves, corrupted by Itarim's divine power, and only their instilled faith remained. The god's command was absolute to them. They rushed back into the collapsing building with blue demonic energy in their eyes and attacked Suho's army.

However, the Hunters who were innocently using the black market were different.

"Wh-what's that?!"

"A moving statue...!"

Their eyes widened at the sight of the giant statue that suddenly emerged from the collapsing chapel. Even though they came here for tax evasion, they were still active Hunters. They instinctively channeled their mana and prepared for battle without anyone giving orders.

But.

Flash!

"...!"

The Stardust necklaces around their necks suddenly emitted a blue light in response to the statue's presence. The light was faint compared to the Star Pieces, but it was enough.

"Gah?!"

"...!"

"Wh-why is the necklace...!" The Stardust necklaces they were wearing were holding them in mid-air like shackles, as if possessed by evil spirits.

"W-what is this——!"

"Gasp! Gasp!" The Hunters struggled in mid-air, desperately trying to remove the necklaces that were strangling them with a strange energy.

And then.

Bang!

"...!" Blood splattered. The Hunter with a gaping hole in his chest had bloodshot eyes.

Hwang Dongsoo nonchalantly pulled his fist out of the body and shook off the blood.

Thud!

He clasped his hands with a solemn expression as he looked at the person that had just lost his life and collapsed before him.

"I offer this sacrifice to the great god."

Fwoosh! At that moment, the mana remaining in the dead Hunter's body scattered like light dust. And that power was absorbed by the statue of Itarim as a 'sacrifice.'

"Gasp...!" Witnessing the shocking scene, the Hunters struggled with all their might to rip off the necklaces.

Snap!

"I-I did it...!"

Bang!

"...I offer this sacrifice." Another sacrifice was added.

Unlike Sung Il-Hwan, Itarim's divine power completely corrupted Hwang Dongsoo. His eyes, filled with blue demonic energy, glared at the non-believers who were fiercely fighting the statue of Itarim.

Smirk. "How dare these blasphemous wretches!"

He jumped into the battlefield with a ferocious aura, intending to kill all the Hunters before him and protect the statue.

Flash! Just like Sung Il-Hwan, blue energy surged from his body.

But then.

Thud!

"It seems you haven't learned your lesson."

Hwang Dongsoo glared at the white-haired old man, Sung Il-Hwan, who was blocking his path, and gritted his teeth.

"Sung Il-Hwan!"

"Don't interfere with my grandson's business. Why don't we old folks play amongst ourselves?"

"Don't be impertinent! I was just careless earlier!"

"Really?" Sung Il-Hwan simply smiled faintly at Hwang Dongsoo's enraged shout.

"Do you really think so?"

The conversation couldn't continue. Hwang Dongsoo lunged at him with all his might.

Boom!

The S-rank villain who became Itarim's High Priest and the S-rank Hunter who broke free from the false god with his own will. As their powers clashed, the mana of the outer universe tore through the air.

[Little Monarch! The statue's power grows stronger every time someone dies!]

As Beru said, the statue of Itarim was absorbing the power of the Outer Gods' Cult members and the Hunters wearing Stardust necklaces whenever they died. Even the cracks and damage it had sustained from the Shadow Army's attacks were rapidly regenerating.

'This won't end like this!'

Suho calmly assessed the situation even while fighting. One thing was certain. The giant statue here wasn't the real Itarim.

'There's no way my father would allow them to come to Earth.'

In other words, this thing was merely a moving statue with a portion of Itarim's power residing within it.

'It's probably just an avatar like Arsha. And the fuel that powers it, is that blue mana!'

Suho maximized his senses. Then, he saw the flow of mana from the dead converging towards the statue of Itarim. And at the end of that flow...!

"Found it!" While attacking the statue, he suddenly changed direction and soared upwards.

Bang! Bang! Bang! Bang!

[...]

Suho, running vertically on the statue's massive body, was aiming for its neck! There, a large necklace that seemed like a mere decoration was carved, and the energy of the dead was converging towards it.

Ziiing - The statue, flustered, shot blue beams to stop him and shouted at Hwang Dongsoo.

[High Priest! Stop him!]

But Hwang Dongsoo wasn't in a position to follow that solemn command.

Boom! Bang! Bang!

Sung Il-Hwan was pinning him down with brute force.

"Kuh...!" Blood spurted from Hwang Dongsoo's mouth. He hated to admit it, but he had no choice. This white-haired old man who was supposed to be the second High Priest after him...!

'He's strong!'

'Overwhelmingly so!'

'Why?! We're in the same situation!'

Despite being helplessly pushed back by Sung Il-Hwan's power, Hwang Dongsoo gritted his teeth in frustration. What was the difference between him and this old geezer?

"We're both S-rank, and the number of Outer Gods jewels implanted in us is the same! Why is there such a difference in strength...?!"

"You ask the obvious." Sung Il-Hwan replied calmly, pushing back the enraged Hwang Dongsoo.

"It's the difference in vessels."

"What... Nonsense!"

To Hwang Dongsoo, who didn't remember his past life, those words would sound like nothing but nonsense. But from Sung Il-Hwan's perspective, there was no simpler answer. Even though this man was once an S-rank Hunter, and later, one of the noble souls who fought to protect the world as a soldier under his son, Sung Jinwoo. The mission bestowed upon him was on a different level. The moment Sung Il-Hwan raised his fist, it was enveloped in the mana of the outer universe. Hwang Dongsoo's eyes widened as if they were about to split at that tremendous power.

Fwoosh!

The primordial light. The 'Fragments of Brilliance,' now called 'Rulers.' They once entrusted their power to Sung Il-Hwan to stop the Shadow Monarch's advent. But when the situation changed, they gave a new order.

[Protect the Shadow Monarch.]

And to achieve that goal, the level of 'mere' national-level Hunter was absolutely insufficient. Who was the Shadow Monarch? He was the 'Greatest Fragment of Brilliant light,' the strongest of all Rulers. And at the same time, he was the King of Darkness, the most powerful of all Monarchs. To stop him, or to protect him, just how much...

"How much power do you think was needed?"

2

"...!"

With those words, a fist plunged towards Hwang Dongsoo. That's right. Sung Il-Hwan. He was the most brilliant Hunter, who fought a lonely battle, pushing himself to the limit until his body crumbled, with the sole determination to protect his son. And the vessel of his soul, which had experienced that noble yet terrible end and was revived...

3

"It's still not enough."

The mana of the outer universe? Outer God Stones? Such meager power hadn't even filled half of his vessel.

8

Bang!

1

"...!"

"Return in death."

That was Hwang Dongsoo's last memory.

CREATORS' THOUGHTS



Craftyprogamer

Solo Leveling: Ragnarok [FAN TL] Chapter 194 - Chapter 193

Chapter 194: Chapter 193

'Who... am I?'

Hwang Dongsoo's soul, endlessly falling towards the black abyss, the sea of the afterlife, was seeing a whirlwind of his past.

'Who am I...?'

Flash! The panorama of his life unfolded rapidly before his eyes.

Well, it wasn't that impressive a life, even looking back at it this way. He was born into a poor family. Abandoned by his only brother for being incompetent. He was lucky enough to become an S-rank villain, but was immediately chased by that damned Choi Jong-In and Woo Jinchul!

And then he met 'them.' 'The Outer Gods' Cult.' At first, he thought they were just another multi-level company disguised as a cult. But it turned out they were more than that, with various businesses and a considerable scale. Above all, they possessed ruthlessness, easily disregarding the suffering of others to achieve their goals. But that's what made them trustworthy. He found it easier to deal with those who didn't hide their desires than those who pretended to be virtuous while concealing their true intentions. Besides, Hwang Dongsoo, who was evading the Association, needed a lot of intelligence. In that respect, the Outer Gods' Cult was quite useful, with their excellent information network. So Hwang Dongsoo readily joined hands with them. He would lend his strength, and they would provide him with information. A fair trade where each side gave and received what they needed.

'Yes, that's how it started.'

'Ah, and then I came to Yangpyeong...'

From Hwang Dongsoo's perspective, this mission wasn't particularly difficult. They wanted him to clear a field-type dungeon that had appeared in Yangpyeong without anyone knowing. More precisely, to eliminate all the magical beasts there so that the Outer Gods' Cult could open a black market under the cover of it. It was an extremely simple request.

But.

'...I was played like a fiddle.'

Hwang Dongsoo's soul gritted its teeth fiercely. He only came to his senses after dying. He remembered what the Outer Gods' Cult had done to him. The field-type dungeon in Yangpyeong. There was a suspicious magic circle laid out there from the beginning. At the time, he thought it was a characteristic of the dungeon, but in reality, that magic was a trap they had prepared for him. And the moment Hwang Dongsoo stepped inside, he was caught in that magic. Like a mantis caught in a spider web. ...And so, Hwang Dongsoo became the High Priest. After that, he sincerely worshiped Itarim and followed their orders without question. Whenever he prayed fervently in the chapel, the Outer Gods Itarim would always bestow grand revelations from somewhere in that great world.

[Spread the Stardust widely.]

[And a great gate will open on this land.]

[Open the gate and Itarim will come.]

[Itarim will come...]

Ah, Itarim!

'...To think I was fooled by such nonsense!'

Kyaaaaaaaaaaaaa - Hwang Dongsoo's soul couldn't hide its frustration. He could see the sea of the afterlife opening its mouth towards him from far below.

He didn't want to go there.

'Why?' Was it because he was angry at being played by the Outer Gods' Cult? Did he want revenge?

'No.' It was because he realized there was a more fundamental reason, a far more critical mission he had to fulfill.

Kyaaaaaaaaaaaaa - Hwang Dongsoo's soul roared. He struggled with all his might to escape this terrifying sea that was swallowing him, flailing his arms. And he desperately reached out towards the distant sky, from which he had fallen.

'I can't die like this!'

'I will return!'

'I...!'

'!!'

At the end of Hwang Dongsoo's desperate gaze, a fierce battle was taking place in that distant sky.

Rumble! Crash!

The statue of Itarim.

The giant statue that the Outer Gods' Cult had created in Itarim's image!

An incredibly small human was fighting against that giant monster!

'...!'

Hwang Dongsoo saw his face. He saw his eyes. He witnessed the darkness unfolding from his hands. And he instinctively realized who he was.

The moment he realized that crucial truth. He recognized that great darkness, resembling the truly great 'him', not some mere Itarim!

Kyaaaaaaaaaaaaa!

[Please...! Save this dying soul of mine!] 'Greed' roared.

[...Call my name!]

Rumble!

At that moment Suho, who was fighting the statue of Itarim, turned his head and saw him. His eyes found Hwang Dongsoo's soul, slowly sinking and disappearing into the sea of the afterlife. He found his desperate hand reaching out. Suho reached out without hesitation and grabbed him.

"Arise."

2

...!

"Greed."

1

Ding!

[Shadow Extraction successful.]

[Kyaaaaaaaaaaaa!]

Greed grabbed his hand and rose from the sea of the afterlife. And with that volcanic momentum, he immediately leaped up and punched the damned statue of Itarim right in the face.

Boom!

Half of its face exploded and shattered.

[Kaaagh! How dare you betray me!] With tremendous murderous intent, the statue's giant hand flew towards Greed and crushed him.

Bang!

But.

[How dare you...]

1

Greed, who had blocked the statue's giant hand with his strength, slowly emerged from beneath it.

[Greed Lv.1]

Rank: General.

... !

[Trying to play a cheap trick on me, a former member of the Shadow Army?]

[Kieek! You're back, Greed!]

[Greed!]

Beru and Iron cheered, welcoming his return. He also recognized them and his eyes lit up. But this wasn't the time for a leisurely reunion.

4

[Everyone...] Just like Iron, Greed, who had returned as a Shadow Soldier, instinctively recognized Suho's true identity. And he also understood the role he had to play as the strongest soldier here.

2

[Assist the Little Monarch! I'll take the lead!]

Fwoosh!

At that moment, all the Shadow Soldiers charged towards the statue of Itarim. And all their attacks concentrated on the statue's necklace, which Suho was also attacking.

Boom! Boom! Boom!

Stone fragments scattered in all directions, and finally, the statue's necklace cracked. But Greed, who was once Itarim's High Priest, knew that the statue's real weakness was hidden inside it!

[Little Monarch, now's the time! That place...!]

1

Before Greed could finish, Suho was already swinging his sword with all his might. Using the Iron Body technique. The black energy extended a giant black blade from the two Vulcan's Horns.

Slash! He sliced through the statue's core, which was now exposed.

Ding!

[You have defeated the statue of the Outer Gods'.]

[Level Up!]

[Level Up!]

[Level Up!]

[Level Up!]

...!

Rumble!

Before Suho, who had achieved a tremendous level up, could rejoice, the giant statue began to crumble on the spot. And the impact was directed towards those who remained nearby.

"Uaagh!" The surviving Outer Gods' Cult members, demons, and ordinary Hunters scattered in panic as stone fragments rained down on them.

"Protect Grandpa!"

The fastest to react to Suho's shout was Greed. [Mr. Sung Il-Hwan! I've come to rescue you!]

"...Well, that was a quick change of heart." Sung Il-Hwan, who had collapsed on the floor, exhausted after expending all his strength, chuckled and obediently let Greed carry him out of there.

1

[A-are you alright?]

"You ask even though you know. Cough."

Blood trickled from Sung Il-Hwan's mouth as he replied with a smile. Seeing this, Greed hurriedly brought him to Suho.

[Little Monarch! Quickly, a potion...!]

"...!" Suho was startled to see his grandfather's condition and took out a healing potion to feed him. But even after drinking it all, Sung Il-Hwan's complexion didn't improve. It was only natural. Even though the statue was destroyed, dozens of Star Pieces were still implanted in his body.

[Kieeeeeek!]

"Grandpa! Have another bottle! And this, and this...!" Suho and Beru frantically took out all the mana potions and detoxification potions and poured them into his mouth. But Sung Il-Hwan was simply touched by his grandson's concern.

"Haha. Calm down. This old man isn't dead yet, so stop fussing." He stretched leisurely, an ominous blue energy still seeping from his body.

"Greed." Suho glared at his new soldier, who was once Itarim's High Priest, and asked,

"Tell me everything you know. What's wrong with Grandpa?"

He must know something, having lived with dozens of Star Pieces in his body just like Sung Il-Hwan. Moreover, with all his memories from his past life restored, Greed knew the most among them.

[Sung Il-Hwan-nim's current condition is...] Greed's expression turned grave as he looked at the Star Pieces embedded in Sung Il-Hwan's body.

Crack - Crack -

Fine cracks were spreading across his skin, centered around the implanted Star Pieces.

[Star Pieces are objects that cause dimensional rifts and summon the mana of the outer universe. They're similar to miniature gates.]

"Gates?" Suho's eyes widened.

"You're saying there are dozens of gates open in my grandfather's body right now?"

"Ahem." ...He said 'my' grandfather. Sung Il-Hwan awkwardly twitched his lips at Suho's words. Although their relationship had been strained for the past few years, it was entirely due to the difference in information they possessed. From Sung Il-Hwan's perspective, knowing that Sung Jinwoo was the Shadow Monarch, he wasn't too worried even when his son suddenly disappeared. But from Suho's perspective, as his son, it was natural to feel resentful towards his grandfather. However seeing Beru beside him, it seemed those misunderstandings had been cleared up without needing a reconciliation. Seeing his grandson fussing over him after a long time wasn't unpleasant.

"Ahem. Don't worry too much. I know my own body well."

Sung Il-Hwan suppressed his proud grin and patted Suho's back with a solemn expression. Then, he turned his gaze towards the gate he had emerged from.

"Suho, let's go inside for now."

"Huh? Into the dungeon?"

"Yes." Finally, Suho's gaze followed Sung Il-Hwan's and landed on the gate.

CREATORS' THOUGHTS



Craftyprogamer

Solo Leveling: Ragnarok [FAN TL] Chapter 195 - Chapter 194

Chapter 195: Chapter 194

The gate Sung Il-Hwan emerged from. It looked quite different from the gates Suho had seen so far. Typically they were basically round in shape. Of course, their sizes could vary, or their shapes could be distorted, but they all fundamentally took the form of a 'hole' punched in the air. On the other hand, the gate Sung Il-Hwan came out of was a

'rift' itself. It was as if the dimensional wall was haphazardly torn and tattered, fluctuating unstably. That appearance...

'It's exactly like the sky I saw in the Glacier Dungeon.'

The sky of the Glacier Dungeon, where countless rifts were entangled and tore the dimensional wall to shreds. Suho thought it resembled the scenery there, although on a much smaller scale.

"Be aware, what lies beyond this is not an ordinary dungeon." Sung Il-Hwan walked towards the gate side by side with Suho, muttering with a serious expression.

At his words, Greed, the former High Priest of Itarim, and Iron, the ordinary priest, following behind added their own information.

[Little Monarch, several field-type dungeons have been intentionally left unattended in Yangpyeong.]

[Those field-type dungeons gradually expanded their territories and eventually merged into one.]

[As a result, the rifts became more distorted, and the dimensional wall got torn even more severely. Like this.]

This phenomenon was called 'Convergence of Rifts' or 'Acceleration of Rifts.' But there was no need for such difficult terms. Beru, the childhood tutor of Suho, explained it very easily.

1

[It's a simple principle. If you consider a single gate as a 'dot,' when two gates connect, they become a 'line.' And when three or more gates connect...]

Rumble!

[...They become a 'plane' like this.] Beru muttered, his eyes narrowed as he looked at the gate right in front of him.

[And when Itarim's meddling is added to the mix, it seems that a gate leading to the 'Void' is artificially created.]

"Void?"

[Yes, the gap between dimensions.]

'Dungeon' referred to a world in a different dimension, separate from Earth.

'Gate' meant the passage connecting those two dimensions.

And 'Void' literally meant the gap existing between those dimensions.

[It's a space of nothingness where anything can exist.]

In other words, the world where Sung Jinwoo wandered with the Shadow Army in search of the Monarchs existed beyond this gate.

[That's why even the Outer Gods' Cult called this phenomenon 'Void.']

[The ultimate goal of the Itarim is to spread these 'Void Gates' throughout Earth and ultimately create a supermassive rift directly connected to the outer universe where they are.]

Having turned the former High Priest and priests into soldiers, internal information was pouring out smoothly.

[The reason why the Outer Gods' Cult built their chapel here is also because they need to create the statue near this Void Gate to connect Itarim's consciousness...]

"W-wait a minute." Esil, who had been listening to their conversation, suddenly grabbed Sung Il-Hwan's clothes from behind with a serious expression.

"Then you're saying Itarim might be inside this gate? Is it okay to go in like this without any preparation?"

At Esil's concern, Sung Il-Hwan smiled warmly and patted her head.

"That's not the case. I've already been inside once."

[Just three or four dungeons merging won't reach the outer universe.]

[If that were the case, Itarim would have invaded long ago.]

"Cough." Blood spurted from Sung Il-Hwan's mouth again, and Suho, having heard all the explanations, finally realized what was happening to his grandfather.

If one Star Piece was a 'dot,' two were a 'line.' And three or more... No, with dozens of Star Pieces embedded in his body, a 'Void' was occurring within Sung Il-Hwan right now.

"...So a Void Gate is about to appear in Grandpa's body."

"Haha. Yes, you understand quickly. It's like a walking gate. If this continues, my body will eventually be torn apart and create a dimensional rift."

"...Let's go in quickly."

Suho stepped into the gate with a grim expression. It was only a temporary measure, but there was only one thing they could do for now. To prevent a dimensional rift from occurring in his body, they had to enter the dimensional rift itself.

Fwoosh!

They passed through the ominously glowing gate and entered the Void. And soon, a grotesquely distorted world unfolded before them. A wide-open horizon could be seen in the distance, and the ground was filled with a chaotic jumble of flickering images. This was the gap between dimensions, the Void.

"Beru." Suho called out, observing this bizarre world.

[Yes.]

"Is this the place where my father wandered for decades?"

[Indeed. To reach the dimensions of the Monarchs, like the Tomb of Berserk Dragons... we had to wander through this place aimlessly, searching for the way.] Beru nodded heavily, recalling those times at Suho's melancholic words.

[Looking back, that journey was truly long and daunting. The Monarch once described it as wandering through a desert.]

"A desert..." Suho was speechless at the weight of those words.

Sung Il-Hwan also clenched his lips and muttered,

"Yes, this is where our Jinwoo..."

This empty world where Sung Jinwoo, his only son, wandered for decades with the mission to protect the world. The emotions he felt as a father, witnessing this place so late, were indescribable. But regardless of his feelings, thankfully, the ominous cracks that had been flickering on Sung Il-Hwan's body stabilized the moment they entered this place. Greed, who was in the same situation, was greatly relieved and explained,

[This is why it's safer for the High Priests of the Outer Gods' Cult to stay within this place. Short trips outside are fine, but after excessively using the power of the Star Pieces like earlier, they need to return here quickly, or their bodies might shatter.]

At those words, Suho checked Sung Il-Hwan's complexion again.

"Grandpa, are you feeling better now?"

"Yes, I'm fine."

Sung Il-Hwan, who had seemed on the verge of collapse, was now in good condition. The effects of diligently making him drink potions were finally showing.

[However, this means he will have to remain trapped inside here from now on.] Beru looked at Sung Il-Hwan with a gloomy expression and teary eyes.

Suho looked at Greed and Iron and asked, "Is there no way to remove the Star Pieces from his body?"

[It would be extremely dangerous. It might be possible with one, but the High Priest level has Star Pieces all over their body...]

"Then... how about having him stay in my shadow?"

[The Shadow World is also a dungeon. For safety, it's best for him to stay within the Void...]

"Hmm..." Suho's expression turned grim as he realized all options led to the same conclusion.

To lighten the mood, Sung Il-Hwan forced a hearty laugh and patted Suho's back.

"Haha. Don't overthink it. Jinwoo wandered here for decades, so it wouldn't be bad to spend some time here, right?"

"Think of it as exploring this place. The problem is that your grandmother will worry too much, but since it's possible to go out for a short time as long as you don't use mana, that's not a problem either. Ah, speaking of which, I need to go out for a bit."

"Ah, Grandma." Suho suddenly remembered his grandmother and aunt, who were still anxiously waiting at the Association.

* * *

"D-dear!"

"Dad-!"

When they returned to the Yangpyeong branch together, many people were waiting for them. First, Suho's grandmother and aunt tearfully embraced Sung Il-Hwan.

Suho turned his gaze to the Association Hunters behind them, who were practically preparing for war.

"Hunter Sung Suho, welcome back."

Team Leader Han Jaehyuk had gathered all the Association forces he could mobilize to attack the black market. He approached with a burning fighting spirit.

"We've already interrogated the Yangpyeong branch manager and grasped the whole situation. Will you join us?"

"You're always a step behind."

"Thank you... What?"

"It's already over."

"What...? What do you mean..."

"I killed those who deserved to die and captured the rest."

"...?"

Suho felt a bit awkward at Team Leader Han Jaehyuk's bewildered expression. On his way back, he had killed all the demons in the black market to gain experience. And the Hunters who were using the black market were arrested by the Association Hunters. Since they were caught for tax evasion rather than being villains, Team Leader Han Jaehyuk said they would only face hefty fines. But the disposal of the most crucial items from this incident remained.

"The Association has decided to confiscate all the Stardust necklaces sold up for sale. The same goes for the Star Pieces found in the black market."

"Then what will happen to them? The Association is also partly responsible for this incident."

"Well, the Chairman is still in North Korea, so the specific plan..."

"The Chairman..."

Shiver - Team Leader Han Jaehyuk suddenly felt a chill.

"How far... can I trust the Association?"

"...!"

He felt as if he was falling into a bottomless darkness as he met Suho's black eyes. But was it just his imagination? The thick and heavy air suddenly lightened, and Suho smiled at Team Leader Han Jaehyuk.

"How about this?"

"...Yes?"

"The Association has lost trust due to this incident, and I've taken care of the black market, so I'll take all the Star Pieces. And the confiscated Stardust necklaces as well."

"Well, that's a bit..."

"For your information, this isn't a suggestion."

"..." Team Leader Han Jaehyuk was speechless at the quiet pressure.

Suho received all the Star Pieces and Stardust necklaces that had been spread across the country from the Association.

[So what are you going to do with them?]

At Beru's question, Suho immediately opened the Shop.

"I'm going to sell them all for gold."

[Kieek! Such a good idea...!] Suho's wisdom greatly impressed him.

But that wasn't the end of the plan. Since the amount of Star Pieces and Stardust necklaces was considerable, the Shop gold, which had been almost depleted, quickly accumulated. And Suho used these funds to purchase a large quantity of potions.

Mana potions, to be exact.

[Kiek? Not healing potions?] Beru looked puzzled. He had expected Suho to find a way to improve Sung Il-Hwan's condition right away, but he was suddenly buying mana potions.

"Potions aren't enough."

He had already experimented with removing the Star Pieces embedded in the foreheads of the demons in the black market to see if they could survive. The results were all failures. They all died with their heads cracked open. In other words, potions couldn't save Sung Il-Hwan.

"I need to create the Holy Water of Life."

[...] Beru's eyes widened at those words.

Suho recalled the ingredients for the Holy Water of Life.

[Spring Water from the Echo Forest.]

[Fragment of the World Tree.]

[Purified Blood of the Demon King.]

He had asked the deceased Monarchs about the Fragment of the World Tree before, and their answers were all the same.

[The King of Beasts, the Monarch of Fangs, shrugs.]

[The Queen of Insects, the Monarch of Pestilence, tilts her head with a thoughtful expression.]

[The King of the Snow Folk and the Monarch of Frost, says that if there's anyone who knows the location of the World Tree, it would be...]

That one person was...

The King of Demonic Specters, the Monarch of Transfiguration.

Only Yogumunt, the Monarch of Transfiguration, who could freely open gates and travel between dimensions, would know its location. But he couldn't think of a way to ask that deceased Monarch either.

Just as he was feeling lost. A thought crossed Suho's mind. The final battle. The strongest Monarch who Sung Jinwoo, fought against until the very end, the Dragon Emperor.

What was the reason why Antares could fight Sung Jinwoo until the very last moment? Wasn't it because the Monarch of Transfiguration cooperated with him and opened countless gates for the Dragon Emperor's army?

Therefore,

"The Dragon Emperor might know something."

Fwoosh!

[Entering the Shadow Dungeon.]

Thump.

Suho picked up 'Kamish's Egg,' which was stored in a corner of the pyramid. He placed a massive amount of mana potions beside it, put one in his mouth, and muttered with a meaningful expression.

"I'll hatch this thing today, no matter what."

Fwoosh!

And so, a tremendous amount of mana began to be poured into Kamish's Egg. Endlessly.

CREATORS' THOUGHTS



Craftyprogamer

Solo Leveling: Ragnarok [FAN TL] Chapter 196 - Chapter 195

Chapter 196: Chapter 195

...Ominous, ominous.

Queen Bee Arsha was watching Suho's actions from a distance with a very anxious look.

Rumble! Rumble! Rumble! The pyramid was making an ominous vibrating sound due to the endless surge of mana from Suho.

On the other hand, Ammut, the owner of the place, was watching all this with interest.

[Hmm. I wonder if a dragon egg can really hatch with such a makeshift method?]

Of course, it wasn't theoretically impossible. But it was unclear whether a normal dragon could be born this way. For one thing, the egg itself was too small compared to a normal one. Originally, it should have received a mana shower from its parents for a long time and grown ten times its current size. But because the father, Kamish, died early, it remained in an immature state. However, perhaps because it was Suho, who wasn't a dragon himself, giving it a mana shower, the egg itself showed no signs of growing.

[...Perhaps even if it hatches, it will be premature or stillborn.] At Arsha's words, Beru, who was munching on a pile of magic stones secretly pilfered from the black market, scoffed.

[Kiha. How ridiculous! How can a mere dragon compare to the noble bloodline of our Suho! He should be honored to be fed mana by the Little Monarch himself, instead of receiving it from a lowly dragon!]

[...I'll just keep my mouth shut.] Sighed Arsha

Ammut ignored Beru and approached Suho for his daily quest. [Now, hatching the egg is important, but first, do your training for today and then continue.]

"Ah, is it already the time?" Suho got up without a word. But Kamish's egg was still in his hand. Ammut chuckled at the sight.

[You're not planning to keep holding that during training, are you?]

"Of course I am. My grandfather's health is at stake; I don't want to waste any time."

Even as he answered, Suho was still pouring mana into Kamish's egg. Ammut's lips curled upwards at his dedication.

[Good! Then do your push-ups with one arm today!]

"It can't be helped." Suho wrapped bandages around his body like a mummy without a word. And Ammut chuckled with an even more satisfied expression.

[How wise! Let's start with a broken arm today!]

Crack!

As soon as he finished speaking and started doing push-ups the refreshing sound of bones breaking was heard from Suho's arm. But he only frowned slightly and continued exercising. With his other hand, he continuously poured mana into Kamish's egg.

[...They're all crazy.] Arsha watched this extreme training relationship from a distance with a tired expression.

2

Fwoosh!

Meanwhile, Kamish's egg, brimming with an ominous aura, was slowly awaiting the time to hatch.

* * *

Thus, a day passed, then two days, then the third day. Despite Suho's bold claim that he would finish it in a day, it still showed no signs of hatching. It was impossible to finish in a day what took dragons years. But he was desperate, with Sung Il-Hwan's well-being on the line. He had been relentlessly struggling with Kamish's egg for three days without sleep.

"Our Suho is going through so much because of his useless grandfather."

2

Sung Il-Hwan, who had briefly visited the Shadow Dungeon out of concern for his grandson, muttered with a bitter expression. But even as he spoke, signs of rifts were slowly starting to appear on his body. If he didn't return to the Void soon before it became more dangerous...

* * *

Crack!

And then.

"Huh?"

"Oh."

[Kiek?]

"Kkuong?"

Everyone's eyes widened. Finally, Kamish's egg was showing signs of hatching!

[The King of Beasts, the Monarch of Fangs, perks up his ears.]

[The Queen of Insects and the Monarch of Plagues, folds her arms and watches.]

[The King of the Snow Folk and the Monarch of Frost...]

The hatching of Kamish's egg was a matter of great interest even to the deceased Monarchs. It was only natural; this was the descendant of the Dragon King, the Monarch of Destruction, Antares. Excluding the Shadow Monarch, who was an anomaly in many ways, this was the moment of the birth of the successor to the power of Antares, the undisputed strongest Monarch.

[Kieek! Little Monarch! You have to push harder now!]

6

Encouraged by Beru's cheers, Suho put another mana potion in his mouth and poured all his strength into it. And finally...!

Crack! Crack! Crack! The egg cracked, and a small lizard peeked its head out.

"Oh, it's born!"

[Kieeeeeek! It's really born!]

[I-in the end...]

Everyone cheered at the same time. Only Arsha closed her eyes tightly and sighed.

'...It's finally born.'

In the end... that dangerous creature was born on this land. And indeed, the creature reflected in Arsha's eyes was truly terrifying. Short black horns protruding from its head. An elongated, round body and tail resembling a lizard. Short limbs attached to its sides, with blunt black claws and small wings. It was undeniably a dragon hatchling, just smaller in size. But for some reason, the creature just stared blankly into the air after hatching.

'Could it be blind?'

Suho was worried. It wasn't born under normal circumstances, so he couldn't help but worry. But his concerns were unfounded.

Blink!

Suddenly, the creature came to its senses, eyes opened wide, and looked forward. And its sight met Suho's, who was holding it in his hands.

Blink?

The creature blinked its round eyes, smiled brightly at Suho, and opened its mouth.

"...Beep!"

Ding!

[Pet: 'Red Dragon Lv.1' acquired.]

"Ah!" The pet system was activated after a long time! And a name tag appeared above the baby dragon's head.

[?? Lv.1 Red Dragon]

"Oh, it became a pet right away? Is it because it was born by consuming my mana?" Suho muttered as he saw the system message that appeared before his eyes.

'Come to think of it, it's similar to Gray.'

Ding!

[You can name your pet.]

[Please name your pet.]

'A name, huh.'

While Suho was pondering a name, a growling sound suddenly came from beside him.

"Growl..."

Was it instinctive rivalry? Gray, his first pet, suddenly started barking fiercely at the baby dragon.

"Growl! Grrr!"

The way he wrinkled his nose and bared his teeth was quite menacing.

[The King of Beasts, the Fang Monarch, nods in satisfaction at his successor's valiant appearance.]

But it was only for a moment.

Tilt?

"Beep?" The baby dragon's head turned to Gray at the sudden noise...

"..." Gray closed his mouth and lowered his gaze with an expressionless face, as if nothing had happened.

"Beep?"

"..."

The baby dragon tilted its head, looking puzzled, but the wolf cub, for some reason, maintained a solemn expression and didn't raise his head. But as soon as the baby dragon turned its head back to Suho, Gray's expression instantly turned ferocious, and he started growling again.

"Grrr...!"

"Beep?"

"..."

Of course, when the baby dragon looked back at him, Gray quickly calmed down, closed his mouth, and lowered his eyes. An amazing transformation. He didn't forget to tuck his tail under his hind legs either. The deceased Monarchs had mixed reactions to this sight.

1

[The King of Beasts, the Monarch of Fangs, sighs softly.]

[The King of the Snow Folk and the Monarch of Frost, bursts into laughter.]

[The Queen of Insects and the Monarch of Plagues, laughs hysterically.]

Suho couldn't help but laugh as well, despite feeling sorry for his first pet. "It seems he's higher in the pecking order than Gray."

[That's only natural. Even if it was born abnormally and is small, a dragon is still a dragon... Kyaaah?!]

Swish- Grab!

And then, Arsha, who was answering Suho's question, was suddenly snatched away by something like a whip.

[S-save me, Suhooo...!]

The culprit was the baby dragon. Arsha's desperate screams gradually faded as he chewed. It was an accident that happened in an instant. But before Suho could worry, The Queen Bee reappeared behind him, unharmed.

[Phew. Don't worry. Thankfully, it was just an avatar... Kyaaah?!]

Swish- Grab!

[...]

And once again, the baby dragon snatched Arsha with its long tongue and swallowed her.

"Beep!"

He then smiled brightly at Suho, who couldn't help but chuckle. The deceased Monarchs had mixed reactions again.

[The Queen of Insects and the Monarch of Plagues, covers her face and can't lift her head.]

[The King of the Snow Folk and the Monarch of Frost, bursts into laughter.]

1

"Honestly. It's like a frog despite behaving like a true apex predator." Suho grinned and decided on the creature's name.

"Then I'll just name it Frog or Froggy..."

5

"No, wait. Suho?" Sung Il-Hwan, who had grabbed Suho's shoulder, said with a serious expression.

3

"Considering we need to ask the Dragon King for a favor, wouldn't it be better to choose his successor's name carefully?"

"Ah, you're right, Grandpa. Then..." Sung Il-Hwan breathed a sigh of relief. After all, his life was on the line.

Suho thought about it again and recalled a character's name from a game he used to play. That character was also a Monarch who controlled fire, so it seemed appropriate for a Red Dragon.

"...Ragnaros. No, let's shorten it to 'Ragnar.' "

7

Ding!

As soon as he decided on the name, a new notification appeared above the baby dragon's head, who was sitting quietly on Suho's hand, rolling its eyes, waiting for Arsha to approach again.

[Ragnar Lv.1]

[Red Dragon]

"Yes, that's much better than Frog." Sung Il-Hwan nodded in relief.

But then.

Whoosh!

"...!"

The moment Ragnar was named, black-red flames suddenly ignited all over his body in Suho's hand.

"Beep!" Ragnar let out a long cry towards Suho.

Ding!

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

Suho's eyes widened as he felt time seemingly stop. The plan was successful! To think he could meet the deceased Dragon King right away like this!

But... Something was strange.

Whoosh!

'...Ugh?!'

A terrible scream erupted from Suho's mouth. This time, it was somehow very different from the other Monarchs.

Whoosh!

'Kaaagh! Kaaagh-!'

It was hot! So hot! As if he had swallowed boiling oil! An intense burning pain started from his throat and spread through his blood vessels, setting his entire body on fire!

'Kyaaaaaaaaaaaaa-!'

Suho's shadow bubbled and boiled, turning into pitch-black flames that started to burn his entire body. In that excruciating pain, his consciousness was gradually sucked into the distant darkness.

And then...

Rumble!

At the end of the deep, deep abyss. In the empty, black and white world that swallowed even light. Suho finally faced him. A man sitting atop a giant dragon's head.

1

'This is...!'

The Dragon King, the Monarch of Destruction, Antares.

He scanned Suho's entire body with an arrogant gaze. And then...

[You.]

Sensing a familiar energy from Suho, the Dragon King suddenly grinned, revealing his teeth in a ferocious expression.

[...You're the son of the Shadow Monarch!]

Rumble rumble rumble!

At that moment, a murderous intent hotter and more ferocious than boiling lava engulfed Suho.

CREATORS' THOUGHTS



Craftyprogamer

Solo Leveling: Ragnarok [FAN TL] Chapter 197 - Chapter 196

Chapter 197: Chapter 196

A suffocating heat surged forward. And many warning messages assaulted his senses.

Ring! Ring! Ring!

[The King of Dragons and the Monarch of Destruction, is watching you.]

[The King of Dragons and the Monarch of Destruction, is hostile towards you.]

[The King of Dragons and the Monarch of Destruction...]

[Potions and the Shop cannot be used in this location, and your condition will not recover even if you level up.]

A sense of urgency could be felt from the system messages that appeared one after another. A crisis had befallen without warning.

'I didn't expect it to be easy...' Suho gritted his teeth and glared at the giant, burning mountain that filled his vision. If boiling lava were to gain life and take the form of a

dragon, would it look like this? That colossal, blazing form was the true image of the Dragon King, Antares.

[How dare you. The offspring of the one who defied me appears before me on his own accord.]

Even though he merely muttered in a low voice, an immense pressure seemed to weigh down on Suho's entire body. The Dragon King, Antares. His father's true nemesis, who had waged a fierce war against the Shadow Army longer than any other Monarch. Indeed, he possessed an overwhelming power, surpassing anybody Suho had encountered so far.

[The King of Dragons and the Monarch of Destruction, uses Skill: 'Breath of Destruction'.]

Rumble! Rumble! Rumble!

A crimson waterfall of flames poured down on Suho like a whip.

'Ruler's Authority!' Suho flew upwards at his maximum speed and evaded the attack. The flames that erased everything... The terrifying white light narrowly grazed his head.

Swish!

At the same time, two swords, the Vulcan's Horns, appeared in Suho's hands.

[Skill: 'Storm Slash' activated.]

Slash! Slash! Slash!

A fierce storm of blades swirled, attacking the dragon's body as it breathed out destruction.

[Useless! Do you think those swords made from a demon's horns can even scratch me?!] The Dragon King mocked Suho and roared towards him, opening its giant maw.

1

Kyaaaaaaaaaaaaaa!

[The King of Dragons and the Monarch of Destruction, uses Skill: 'Dragon Fear'.]

'...!' Suho felt an indescribable fear at the intangible energy emitted by Antares, the ruler of dragons.

Rumble! Rumble! Rumble! The earth trembled, and the sky shook. No, it was Suho himself who was truly trembling.

Ring!

[Debuff: 'Fear' activated.]

[All stats are reduced by 50% for 1 minute.]

'Ugh!' Overwhelming. There was no other way to describe it. Suho saw his hands holding the Vulcan's Horns tremble. The pressure was on a completely different level compared to when he fought Queresha.

But.

'So what?'

So what if he was overwhelmed? His opponent was the loser who knelt before his father. Wouldn't it be a disgrace to his name to back down in fear?

1

'I'll endure.'

Suho clenched his trembling jaw and forced a grin. He barely resisted the fear instilled by Dragon Fear and spoke.

'Are you all... watching?'

There were those who answered him.

[The King of Beasts and the Monarch of Fangs is watching you.]

[The Queen of Insects and the Monarch of Plagues is watching you.]

[The King of the Snow Folk and the Monarch of Frost is watching you.]

The gazes of the other Monarchs who had bestowed their blessings upon Suho poured towards him.

[Oh?] It wasn't just Suho who felt those gazes. The Dragon King raised an eyebrow in interest.

Fwoosh! Suddenly, silver dust scattered around Suho, and the phantoms of the deceased Monarchs appeared. Under their gazes, the Dragon King smirked and asked,

[What trick did you use? You've cleverly brought the other Monarchs to your side.]

'I... am their Priest.' Suho answered

[Priest?]

'Yes. You'll also need a successor to inherit your power, won't you?'

The Dragon King laughed scornfully at those words.

[...A successor to inherit my power?]

[You're not suggesting that fool you hatched as my successor, are you?]

'Fool?'

Something was strange. The Dragon King was genuinely mocking Suho's suggestion.

[Hatching Kamish's egg with a human's meager mana is impressive... But so what?]

[Do you really think a creature that has become someone's pet is worthy of inheriting the power of the Dragon King?]

...!

Antares already knew everything. But the fact that the hatchling of Kamish, who was only born thanks to Suho's mana, became his pet infuriated him the most. That's why he couldn't suppress his rage, and at the same time, he felt an immense shame at the weakness of the baby dragon, who had become a mere human's pet right after birth. The arrogant Dragon King's pride erupted into a giant flame and spewed towards Suho.

Rumble Rumble! Rumble!

[Child of Shadow, you shall burn and suffer eternally in this place!]

Whoosh!

At that moment, the entire world turned into boiling lava which swallowed everything. This was Antares' domain. If he wished, he could turn this entire space into a burning inferno. And Suho would have no way to escape the flames.

2

'Kaaaaaaaagh...!' All he could do was writhe and scream in the excruciating burning pain. The other Monarchs hurriedly bestowed their blessings to save him.

[The spirit of Pet: 'Gray' possesses the Priest's body.]

Fwoosh! Suho's hair turned silver, and a divine wind enveloped him.

[Skill: 'Blizzard of Frost' activated.] The Monarch of Frost summoned a blizzard to counter Antares' flames.

[The Queen of Insects and the Monarch of Plagues, uses Debuff: 'Paralyzing Poison' to alleviate your pain.] Queresha also tried to protect Suho in her own way.

After all, Suho was their Priest, so they had to prevent him from burning to death. But...

[Get lost! You spineless fools!]

Whoosh!

All those blessings were burned away by Antares' roar, as if they were nothing. His fury was directed not only at Suho but also at the other Monarchs beside him.

[Those who should reign above choose to submit. You are no longer worthy of the title of Monarch!]

Crackle!

His inferno repelled the Grasslands Wind and even melted the Blizzard. The phantoms of the Monarchs who were trying to help scattered and disappeared like mirages.

'Ugh...!'

With all help gone, Suho was left falling into the flames Antares was pouring out, completely exposed... His resilience skill...? It only increased physical defense so it was useless in this situation. His HP plummeted relentlessly. And since the use of potions was prohibited, the situation was truly desperate with no hope in sight. But then...

...Thud.

At some point, screams stopped coming from Suho's mouth, buried in that inferno.

[...Huh?] A glint of surprise flickered in Antares' eyes.

Thud! Thud!

Step by step. Suho was walking through the flames, slowly approaching the Dragon King. Of course, the pain was still there. His whole body was so hot that it felt like his heart would stop at any moment. Nevertheless...

'...It can't be helped.'

Change of plans. Suho gritted his teeth with a stubborn expression, forcibly suppressing his screams, and raised his fist.

'I'll kill you before I die.'

[Huh?] A scoff escaped Antares' lips at those ridiculous words.

[Skill: 'Giant's Armor' activated.]

[Skill: 'Iron Body Technique' activated.]

Fwoosh!

Suho's body grew larger as he channeled the black aura with all his might.

Boom!

His fist landed. And Antares' massive body staggered.

[...?!]

For the first time, a look of bewilderment crossed the Dragon King's eyes. But it was only for a moment. Then he laughed heartily.

3

[Hahaha... Uhahahahahahaha!]

He, who was riding atop the giant dragon in human form, clutched his forehead and started chuckling. His laughter seemed to carry mana, making Suho's heart pound with every burst. But suddenly his laughter ceased. Antares' vertically slit pupils gleamed ominously, and he looked down at Suho with an arrogant smile. An expression as if he had finally found an interesting toy.

[How amusing.]

[Entertain me more.]

The giant dragon's maw opened to devour the toy.

Crunch! Suho was swallowed in one bite.

'Ugh...' He barely managed to support himself with his arms and legs spread wide within that giant maw. But he succeeded in breaking one of Antares' fangs.

Crack!

[Kaaagh! How dare this insect-!]

'Insect, huh.' Seemingly pleased with that term, Suho grinned and said,

'How about calling me vermin instead?'

Crack!

He mercilessly stomped on the Dragon King's broken fang infusing numerous poisons into his attack.

[Debuff: 'Paralyzing Poison' activated.]

[Debuff: 'Kasaka's Venom' activated.]

...

[How dare you-!]

Vermin indeed. Suho, with a ferocious expression, repeatedly struck the roof of the dragon's mouth.

Boom! Bang! Bang! Bang! Bang!

[The King of Dragons and the Monarch of Destruction, uses Skill: 'Breath of Destruction'.]

...Whoosh!

Terrible flame erupted from Antares' throat. It instantly burned away the poison and scorched Suho's body black. But...

'I'm not dead yet.'

Crack!

[...?!]

Even in that excruciating pain, he managed to break another fang. And using that as a weapon, he chose to jump into the dragon's throat instead of dodging the attack. wHe mercilessly thrust the fang into the gap, and the Breath of Destruction flowing through the throat exploded.

Boooooom!

[Kyaaaaaaaaaaaaagh!]

Antares thrashed his head from side to side, struggling. The shock of the Breath of Destruction exploding within his own body was far greater than he had imagined. But Suho didn't stop there. He raised his fist and repeatedly hammered the embedded fang like a nail.

Bang! Bang! Bang! Boom! He punched a hole in the giant dragon's neck and forcibly tore it open with both hands.

Rip! Antares' neck split open as if cut by a sword, and dragon blood gushed out like a fountain.

[Kyaaaaaaaaaaaaagh!]

The screams echoing through the sky were incredibly satisfying, but he knew he couldn't defeat Antares with just this level of attack. Suho was also at his limit. His consciousness was fading, as if he would pass out any time. At that critical moment a thought suddenly occurred to Suho.

'Dragon King! I have another idea.'

[Kyaaaaaaaaaaaaagh!]

'I don't need a Priest anymore.'

1

Whether Antares listened or not, Suho spoke his mind.

'I will become your successor.'

He stood firm.

[...What?]

Antares, writhing in anger and pain, couldn't believe his ears.

'You said Ragnar isn't qualified to be the Dragon King because he's my pet? Then how about me?'

'If the meaning of 'Dragon King' is the master of dragons. I have one as my pet.'

[...!]

Yes. This insanely powerful Monarch's power. He had witnessed it firsthand; how could he not be tempted?

'I will become the Monarch of Destruction.'

1

CREATORS' THOUGHTS



Craftyprogamer

Solo Leveling: Ragnarok [FAN TL] Chapter 198 - Chapter 197 Chapter 198: Chapter 197

[...] At Suho's exclamation, Antares fell silent for a moment.

[...Huh.] A snort finally erupted from his mouth.

[Hehehehe... Uhahahahahaha!] His crazed laughter shook the heavens and earth.

[Did you just say you would become the Monarch of Destruction? A mere human, not even a dragon, dares to?]

Roar!

Antares. He was the true Monarch of Destruction, who enjoyed bloody battles and felt complete ecstasy only on the battlefield. He had thought he would never be able to fight again, trapped in the distant realm of death, so he intended to savor this long-awaited battle. But at this moment. All the excitement vanished because of the arrogant words uttered by this insignificant vermin.

[Perish, child of Shadow.]

Destruction descended in an instant.

Rumble! Rumble! Rumble!

'Ugh...!'

The giant dragon's form, bleeding from Suho's attacks, transformed into bubbling lava and swallowed him. As if all the previous battles were mere child's play. An insurmountable killing intent sought Suho's annihilation.

But then...

"Indeed, Suho." A voice, like a gentle breeze, came from somewhere far away.

"I understand your intentions."

'...?!' The calm yet deeply moving tone brought tears to his eyes.

[Th-this is?!] Antares was even more surprised than Suho.

And then, there was light.

Flash!

'Ah...' At the same time, the flames burning Suho's body began to die down. All the inferno in his vision began to crumble. And what replaced it was pure darkness.

[...Khahahahahaha! So that's it! It was you all along!] Antares, sensing something from the sudden turn of events, burst into laughter like a madman. It was a laughter filled with relief, welcome, and extreme rage all at once.

And then... Whoosh!

In that place where all the heat subsided and darkness descended. Suho stood on both feet in the midst of the pitch-black abyss. And Antares, transformed into his human form, descended before him.

[Yes, I thought something was strange from the beginning.] His arrogant gaze calmly scanned Suho's figure. A miserable sight, charred black by the Breath of Destruction.

Indeed, Suho's body had been no different from a corpse for a while now. It was a wonder he could even stand on his legs. But nevertheless...

Suho's eyes, meeting Antares' gaze head-on, were still burning like an inextinguishable flame. Antares however, was seeing something completely different beyond Suho's defiant stare. The familiar presence of the shadow cast long behind those eyes, reminiscent of 'him.'

[Tsk...]

[Even though I'm just a deceased spirit, there's no way this brat's power could reach me.] Antares clicked his tongue and shouted towards 'him.'

[Stop hiding and come out!]

Flash!

'...!'

As soon as the Dragon King finished speaking. Suho's eyes widened at the sight of the inventory window opening before him on its own. One of the items quietly stored inside started to glow and popped out.

Flash!

[Item: Javier's Soulstone]

[Acquisition Difficulty: ??]

[Type: Gem]

[A gem made by compressing a demon's soul.]

Javier's Soulstone. The unidentified item left behind by Javier in Haeundae, Busan. And this thing...

– Just in case, keep it in your inventory.

...was the item Sung Jinwoo's phantom left with Suho before disappearing.

– Just in case?

– Yes. Seeing you fight, I'm a bit... concerned.

Ding!

[Item: 'Javier's Soulstone' activated.]

Fwoosh!

'Ah...!' Suho saw it. The magic circle invented by the demonic spirits spreading from Javier's Soulstone. The black energy emanating from it. That energy gathered into one and...

Thud!

'He' appeared once again.

'...!' The moment Suho saw that firm and solid back, his eyes widened in shock.

"F-father?!"

"You've done well."

"You endured..."

Sung Jinwoo's phantom turned his head slightly and looked at Suho with a faint smile on his lips. What he saw was Suho's HP bar.

[HP: 1/67,340]

Just 1. Suho's HP had stubbornly remained at 1 for a while now, refusing to drop any further. It was thanks to the magic engraved into Javier's Soulstone. The Sung Jinwoo who appeared here was merely a phantom from memories, not his true self, so he couldn't exert any real influence on reality. But it was different in a place like this. It seems squeezing the demon's soul to its limit was worth it. Sung Jinwoo's phantom had infused his last remaining essence, which was scattering in Busan, into Javier's Soulstone.

His gaze, after checking Suho's condition, turned forward again. And the moment his eyes met Antares', they flashed ominously.

"Yes, I knew you'd do something like this."

[...It's been a while. Have you been well?]

Antares spoke with a calm smile on his face. But his eyes were overflowing with a more ferocious energy than ever before, as if he would attack at any moment. Sung Jinwoo knew the Dragon King's personality better than anyone. That's why he couldn't help but worry about his son, Suho, who claimed to be the Priest of the deceased Monarchs. Not many were aware of the fact that Antares was a ruthless battle maniac who only communicated through violence. His only interests were fighting and annihilating his enemies, as befitting the name Monarch of Destruction, he was a being who truly sought nothing but destruction.

[I briefly fought your son, and he was pathetic. Has the comfortable peace dulled the Shadow Monarch's blood?]

"He struggled quite a bit, though?"

1

[It must have been your influence. Did you learn the magic of the demonic spirits? Since when did the Shadow Monarch resort to such petty tricks?]

"Well, raising children is always a continuous learning experience." Sung Jinwoo shrugged and spread his hands.

"But thank you. Because of you, I gained something useful."

[What?]

A new magic circle unfolded on his palms.

Flash. Flash! Flash!

As it spun, a system message arrived before Suho.

Ding!

[Title: 'Overcomer of Adversity' acquired.]

'...This is?'

[Title: Overcomer of Adversity]

[A title given to those who have overcome adversity magnificently.]

[Stats increase in proportion to lost HP.]

[1% stat increase per 1% HP lost]

2

A buff that increases stats as HP decreases. This was a title Sung Jinwoo had acquired long ago when he cleared his job change quest. But it was different for Suho. No matter how much he leveled up, he couldn't receive job change quests, so it was an achievement he could never obtain. However, if he met the conditions like this, it wasn't difficult for Sung Jinwoo to manipulate the system and grant it to him directly.

Whoosh!

The moment the title's effect was applied, Suho's body, which had been on the verge of death, suddenly overflowed with power.

[What are you doing?] Antares frowned at Sung Jinwoo's sudden action. He wanted to have a good fight with him since they met after a long time, but it was impossible...

Sung Jinwoo was merely a phantom. Moreover, it was a phantom surrounded by the magic of the demonic spirits race, which specialized in manipulating souls, so a proper battle was out of the question. Especially in this world of death, his existence was practically cheating.

"Father..." Finally regaining his senses with the newfound strength, Suho blinked and looked at his father.

Sung Jinwoo reached out and ruffled his son's hair, then answered Antares' question.

"What else? Just some career counseling." Sung Jinwoo's face, with a faint smile, was full of affection as he looked at his son.

1

"My son has finally decided on his own path, so shouldn't I help him out a bit as a father?"

Flash! Sung Jinwoo placed his hand on Suho's head as if giving a baptism and cast a spell.

Then he asked: "Suho, did you know? The original purpose of the level-up system was to develop the human body into a vessel for a Monarch. In my case, it was the 'Shadow Monarch,' but it's entirely possible to replace that with another Monarch. However..."

'...' Suho knew what his father was trying to say. That process won't be easy.

"Even today, I wouldn't have been able to guarantee the outcome if I wasn't here. Are you sure about this? Do you still want to become the Monarch of Destruction?"

"Yes..." Suho swallowed nervously and nodded resolutely at his father's concerned gaze.

"And I had to meet the Dragon King anyway to ask about the location of the World Tree."

"The World Tree? Are you trying to make the Holy Water of Life? Why all of a sudden?" Sung Jinwoo could infer a lot just by hearing the words 'World Tree.' But Suho's answer surprised even him.

"Grandpa is in danger."

'...!'

Sung Jinwoo's face hardened as he listened to Suho's explanation. Then, he made a determined expression and manipulated the magic circle he was engraving on Suho's head.

"Hmm. I understand. Then... it would be best to do this. And the job change quest..."

[Wait a minute, you two...]

3

"Hold on. This is more important right now."

[...] Antares, who had been listening to the conversation between father and son from behind, frowned at the strange turn of events.

[What about my opinion?]

"Antares." Sung Jinwoo, having completed the magic circle, turned to the Dragon King and said,

"I know my son's vessel is far too inadequate to inherit your power. He's not even a dragon. So I have a proposition."

[A proposition?]

"Yes. You must be bored being dead, so don't you want to go on a rampage outside?"

[...What do you mean?] Antares frowned at Sung Jinwoo's words.

But The Shadow Monarch knew Antares' personality better than anyone. The true embodiment of destruction. He was a ruthless maniac who felt the joy of life only in bloody battles. So he could be sure that Antares wouldn't refuse his offer. Sung Jinwoo extended his hand to the Dragon King and made an irresistible proposal.

"Ragnar. I'll give you the body of the dragon who is my son's pet."

[...!]

"Come back to life, Antares."

2

At that moment, the contract was made.

Ding!

[Job change quest arrived.]

Solo Leveling: Ragnarok [FAN TL] Chapter 199 - Chapter 198

Chapter 199: Chapter 198

Whoosh!

"...Suho!"

[Kieeeeeek! Little Monarch!]

Time, which had stopped, started moving again. Suho, suddenly thrown back into reality, saw people rushing towards him with worried expressions. His grandfather, Beru and even Ammut were looking at him with a bewildered expression. It was no wonder. Crimson flames were suddenly surging from Suho's entire body. It turned out that it wasn't just an illusion visible only to him, but actual flames caused by Antares.

Whoosh!

"Ugh!"

Suho collapsed on the spot in excruciating pain. The flames covering his body soon turned into smoke and died down, but Suho's HP was still close to zero. But since this was reality, there was a way to change that.

"...Accept health recovery!"

Flash!

Suho, who had been near death, instantly recovered as if he had leveled up.

"Suho! Are you alright?!"

"Haa... Yes, I'm fine." He got up with Sung Il-Hwan's help and patted his chest.

'It's a good thing I saved the daily quest reward.' It was a close call. Thanks to recently recovering from the aftereffects of Iron Body training with bandages and potions, he still had a reward left.

"Aren't you pushing yourself too hard these days?"

"No. I just... met with the Dragon King."

[Kieek?! You met the Dragon King...?! Potions! Have some more potions!]

1

"Ah, I'm fine now."

Beru frantically checked on Suho, circling him. On the other hand, Arsha had already run away as soon as she heard the word 'Dragon King', and Ammut was staring intently at Suho with an intrigued gaze. He was a mess. Even though his health had recovered, the clothes Suho was wearing were burned to rags by the flames of destruction.

Ammut grinned, baring his teeth. [Krrr. If you faced the Dragon King, it's a miracle you returned alive. So, did he tell you the location of the World Tree?]

"Ah, the World Tree..." Suho smiled bitterly, recalling his father's words in the Dragon King's world of rest.

– Suho, I can tell you the location of the World Tree. But the path there won't be easy. – It wasn't just Antares who wandered through the dimensional gaps while fighting; Sung Jinwoo did the same. But even though he knew the location of the World Tree, he couldn't easily tell Suho the shortcut.

– Standing before the World Tree at your present level would be perilous. So focus on growing stronger for now. – In the past, Sung Jinwoo had obtained the 'Fragment of the World Tree' as a reward for hunting Vulcan in the Demon Castle. But that was entirely due to the system's arrangement, and it was impossible for Suho to use that method now. In the end, he had to find the real World Tree with his own strength, not just a fragment.

– Antares will tell you the rest. – With those words, Sung Jinwoo manipulated the system and created a new quest for Suho.

...And that was it.

Suho raised his eyes and looked at the quest window that appeared before him.

[Job change quest arrived.]

2

[Do you accept the job change quest?]

[Y/N]

Gulp. Suho swallowed. The Yes or No options were blinking before his eyes. His heart pounded in his chest... How could it not? The job change quest, which he had never even dared to dream of in his life, had finally appeared. And it was the result of his own efforts.

'Accept.'

Ding!

The moment he decided to accept the quest, a new window unfolded before his eyes.

[You have accepted the job change quest.]

[Job Change Quest: The Dragon King's Trial - 1]

[The Monarch of Destruction, Antares, mocks your weakness. If your current frail body were to receive the Dragon King's power, it would burn to ashes.]

1

[Meet the minimum qualifications to become the Dragon King's successor.]

[Objective: Reach level 99.]

'Level 99.' Suho seemed to understand how this standard was set. It was the 'dream' he had when he was a teenager. Back then, he endlessly fought and leveled up against his father's Shadow Army, including Beru.

'Thinking about it now, they must have been going easy on me.' But at the time, the path was so arduous and filled with fierce battles that he didn't even realize they were holding back. After countless battles, creating mountains of corpses of giants and dragons, he reached the highest level at the end of the long road across the plains.

[Level: 99]

That was the end. No matter how many battles he went through after that, no matter how skillfully he wielded his power, he could never advance to the next stage. As if level 100 didn't exist. So back then, he simply thought that 99 was the end.

'...But what if it wasn't?'

Suho realized. 'Could that have been my limit?'

Hah. A burning competitive spirit surged within him, and he grinned. 'So... Let's start with that.'

Just then...

"Beep?" The small lizard that was sitting quietly on his hand made a noise.

Ragnar. The newly hatched baby dragon blinked its round eyes with a silly expression and looked at Suho.

"Ask the Dragon King, he said..."

"Beep?"

Suho held Ragnar's small body and looked into his eyes. The contract between Sung Jinwoo and Antares set a condition for making Suho the Dragon King's successor, and

at the same time, a necessary procedure for it. To inherit that power, a 'priest' was naturally needed to carry out the procedure. That's right. If Suho was the Dragon King's successor, Ragnar was the priest.

"Awaken, Antares."

"Beep?"

As soon as Suho finished speaking, a great spirit possessed Ragnar's small body.

Whoosh!

[The spirit of 'Antares' possesses the Priest's body.]

In an instant, Ragnar's eyes, which had been rolling around with a silly expression, deepened. His gaze stared blankly into the void and muttered softly.

"...An unfamiliar ceiling." He opened his eyes to an unfamiliar ceiling.

Thump. Thump. Thump. Thump.

The sound of a heart beating violently deep within his small body. He felt the noble dragon blood coursing through his veins. And then...

Breath in - Breath out.

The first breath. Fresh air filled his lungs as he expanded his chest and inhaled deeply. Yes, all of this was proof.

'Ah, I see.' Finally, 'he' realized. He was certain that he had truly returned to life.

"Hehehe... Hahaha!" 'Antares' burst into laughter, overjoyed.

"Haha! I'm back! This Dragon King has overcome even death and returned from the sea of the afterlife! Khahahahahaha!"

"...!"

Everyone in the Shadow Dungeon trembled at the Dragon King's energy contained in that crazed laughter.

"Ugh! This power, could it be...?" Sung Il-Hwan instinctively braced himself to unleash the power of the rift, even if it meant endangering himself.

[Th-the Dragon King?!] Even Ammut was tense, preparing to control gravity.

Rumble! Rumble! Rumble...!

[Kieeeeeek!] Beru, who had fought countless battles against the Army of Destruction led by the Dragon King long ago, reacted more violently than anyone else.

[Little Monarch! Let go of his hand! I will protect you!]

Antares was extremely satisfied with their reactions.

"Hehe. Yes, tremble in fear before me."

1

Who was he? The 'First Monarch' and the 'Strongest Monarch,' born from the primordial darkness. The king who reigned over all dragons, the symbol of fear and destruction. Those who knew him called him 'Dragon King' with utmost respect and reverence.

"I am the Dragon King, Antares."

"...!"

Everyone except Suho prepared for a decisive battle at Antares' declaration. But the reason they couldn't attack him right away was simple...

He was currently being held in Suho's hand. But that was only for a moment. Antares escaped from his grasp and jumped down. And he slowly got up and took his first grand step as a Monarch who had overcome death and returned from the sea of the afterlife.

"Hehe. As expected of Kamish's hatchling, this body is quite usable." Antares couldn't hide his satisfaction despite his short legs wobbling.

Second life as a dragon. Who else in the world could walk so skillfully right after being born from an egg, except for a great being like himself?

The principle was simple. Spread the small wings wide to maintain balance. Use the tail to support the body and prevent falling backward.

Wobble. Wobble. Wobble. Of course, he still lacked strength, so his legs trembled incessantly just from standing.

"This much is easy with mana." Antares skillfully drew mana from Ragnar's heart. And then started walking with renewed vigor.

"Hahahaha! Did you see that?! How delightful! To live a second life in the body of a newly hatched dragon!" Antares shuddered with anticipation.

His past self had already reached an insurmountable peak. His power had reached an extreme where further growth was impossible. But with all that experience and talent, he was given the opportunity to grow again, starting as a hatchling! A true second life as a dragon! But then...

"Khahahahahaha! ...Beep?" Antares' eyes, which had been gleaming with a murderous aura as he laughed, suddenly turned vacant.

Ding.

[Ragnar's mana is depleted.]

[The spirit of 'Antares' dwelling in the Priest's body is leaving.]

"Beep? Beeeep?"

Ragnar tilted his head with a clueless expression. Then, he flinched, realizing that countless people were surrounding him, emitting tremendous hostility. And like a newborn baby, he burst into tears.

"Waaaaah-!"

"..."

[...]

No one spoke. Hmm. It seemed something incredible had just happened. Suho silently picked up the crying Ragnar and patted his back... Well, he had to soothe the crying baby for now.

Pat, pat...

"Beee woo..." Finally, Ragnar closed his eyes and fell asleep, relieved.

As everyone breathed a sigh of relief at his needlessly cute appearance. Someone's grievance could be heard from a distant world, directed towards Suho.

[The Dragon King, the Monarch of Destruction, is indignant, claiming this is a scam.]

11

[The Dragon King, the Monarch of Destruction, is contemplating ways to increase Ragnar's mana.]

[The Dragon King, the Monarch of Destruction, is thinking about Ragnar's upbringing...]



Craftyprogamer

Solo Leveling: Ragnarok [FAN TL] Chapter 200 - Chapter 199

Chapter 200: Chapter 199

While Suho was hatching Ragnar and having a squabble with the Dragon Emperor, American society was in a state of shock.

- Thomas Andre killed Christopher Reed?!
- Oh my God!
- I guess we finally know who's stronger between the two!
- But I didn't want it to actually happen like this!

The incident of two S-rank Hunters representing the United States fighting each other for some reason, resulting in one dying, wasn't simply a murder case. The death of an S-rank Hunter was an astronomical loss for the United States. But the bigger problem was that the perpetrator of this shocking crime was also an S-rank Hunter.

- Thomas Andre should be held fully accountable and executed!
- Hey, buddy. We've already lost one S-rank Hunter, and you want to kill another? Are you trying to destroy America?
- No, but do you really think that's possible?
- Thomas Andre is currently under arrest, but if he has ill intentions, at least half of the US population will die.
- But didn't Thomas surrender to the Bureau because he admitted his guilt?
- Surrender? Do you really think that was a surrender? Didn't you see the picture of that crazy tyrant stopping by a burger joint after being arrested?

3

Americans were heatedly debating the issue of Thomas Andre's punishment. But there was one thing they all agreed on. It didn't matter that he was arrested for murder, if they

touched him, the United States would never be safe, both economically and physically. Additionally, there was one more aspect that piqued the curiosity of all Americans.

– So where is the Hunter Bureau holding Thomas Andre right now?

– Isn't it 'Area-51,' obviously?

2

– Yeah, where else could it be?

Area 51. Located in the Nevada desert, it was a top-secret military base managed by the US Department of Defense, originally built as a clandestine site for developing and testing new weapons. The US government had remained silent about the questions surrounding this place, but eventually acknowledged its existence when a 355-page classified document from the CIA was released. But what really intrigued people about this secret base was the countless rumors surrounding it. Rumors that they were secretly holding aliens and conducting biological experiments. That they had recovered UFO wreckage and were conducting joint research with aliens. Area 51 was associated with all sorts of strange and mysterious rumors. And with the advent of the Hunter era, Area 51 was incorporated under the Hunter Bureau and utilized in various ways. So people's speculation that it was the only place to hold Thomas Andre was quite convincing. But...

1

The reality was quite different from what was suspected.

"One more glass."

"Yes. Mr. Thomas, how much ice would you like?"

Clink. The bartender's eyes, as he placed large ice cubes in the transparent wine glass, subtly glanced at Thomas Andre.

"Hey, Adam! Would you like a drink too?"

"...Thank you, but I'm still on duty, so I don't think I can."

Adam White, the head of the Hunter Bureau, who had just entered the mansion, smiled bitterly at Thomas, who was already quite drunk and waving at him. That's right. This absurdly luxurious mansion was the 'prison' the Hunter Bureau had specially prepared for this situation.

Calling it a prison was generous; it was practically a resort. Thomas Andre, who had been arrested as a criminal, wasn't wearing a prison uniform either. He was dressed in

a colorful floral t-shirt and shorts, leisurely enjoying a vacation by the pool. He was also fully aware of Adam White's position, so he grinned and asked him,

"What about my punishment? It's the death penalty, right?"

"...Enough with the jokes, let's talk business." Adam White sighed and had his accompanying secretaries lay out the collected investigation materials before him.

"Ooh? Was it that much?" Seeing the amount, Thomas Andre raised an eyebrow and his eyes gleamed.

"Yes. As you said, Mr. Thomas."

Adam White, the former head of the Hunter Bureau, had immediately launched an investigation into the Outer Gods' Cult after hearing the real reason why he killed Christopher Reed. Public opinion was leaning towards Thomas Andre, who was already infamous for his foul temper, killing Christopher Reed in a fit of rage. But Adam White was relieved to learn that the truth was different.

"...There are far more Outer Gods' Cult members active across the US than we expected."

The Outer Gods' Cult. An unidentified cult that emerged out of nowhere.

"Surprisingly, their goals and actions are quite moderate compared to other cults. At most, they're just proselytizing and selling Stardust."

"That's to be expected. Their goal was to remain hidden, after all. So, did you recover the Stardust and Star Pieces?"

"Yes. We confiscated everything we could find. There was no legal basis to arrest them, so we bought everything... And we're keeping them under surveillance."

"Hehe. As always, your work is impeccable."

"..."

Thomas Andre raised his wine glass as if making a toast and drank it all in one gulp. The subordinate staff members beside Adam White couldn't help but feel indignant. They were offended by the way he treated Adam White, the head of the Hunter Bureau, like his underling. But what could they do? Thomas Andre. That man had the qualifications and power to act that way. Even Adam White himself didn't seem to mind his disrespectful attitude. Rather, at a time when an unidentified group was operating in the US, Thomas' help was needed more than ever to maintain peace in the country.

"But... it's true, isn't it? That the mana-restricting cuffs don't work on you."

"Ah, that's right." Thomas Andre shrugged nonchalantly at Adam White's words.

Currently, Thomas Andre's wrists and ankles were bound with mana-restricting cuffs designed to restrain villains. Those cuffs were a remarkable invention developed by the Korean Hunter Association and widely used worldwide. But during the arrest, Thomas Andre wore those cuffs, yet mana was still surging from his body.

"Didn't I tell you? I can absorb the mana of the outer universe. And these mana-restricting cuffs don't work on that. It won't work on Stardust amplifiers or Outer Gods' Cult members either."

"...You said the person who shared that information with you was Hunter Sung Suho from Korea?"

"Hehe. That's right. He's a very promising young man."

"Anyone who sees your expression now would think he's your hidden son."

"Oh, it's similar. He's the son of my longtime best friend."

7

Adam White shook his head at Thomas Andre, who was smiling proudly as he thought of Sung Suho. He was simply dumbfounded. This was the first time he felt so powerless since becoming the head of the Hunter Bureau, which protected the United States.

"I'm very sorry to say this, but I'm truly anxious. What's happening on Earth right now?"

"It's an interstellar war, I tell you."

"Sigh..." Adam White, who couldn't believe nor disbelieve those absurd words, could only press his forehead and sigh. Seeing Thomas leisurely drinking here after saying such things made him even more frustrated.

"By the way, did you ask the Korean Association for cooperation?"

"Yes. We heard the Chairman is currently in North Korea, so we sent someone there."

"Good. It has to be the Chairman himself. Our Suho said not to trust anyone else."

'...Sung Suho again.'

"Ah, and do you have any spare high-grade magic stones in the Bureau's warehouse? If you do, it would be great if you could send them all to our Suho. He said he needs a lot of magic stones these days."

2

"...Those are expensive."

"I'll pay for them."

"The auction price... Never mind. I'll do that."

"Hey, lighten up. This is all for Earth, you know? Do you think America will be safe if Earth falls? Ah, if you don't have many high-grade ones, scrape together some mid-grade magic stones."

"..."

Honestly, wasn't this just extortion? It began with a hamburger, but once they started giving in, he was demanding more and more. The Hunter Bureau staff couldn't hide their frustration at the sight of this super criminal. And the more brazenly he acted, the more curious they became. Just who was this Korean Hunter, 'Sung Suho,' whom Thomas Andre was so blatantly doting on?

'I guess I'll have to meet him myself. It would be a disaster if Thomas Andre is being deceived by him.' Adam White resolved to schedule a visit to Korea soon.

"Ah! And to our Suho..."

3

"..."

"Please stop."

* * *

Meanwhile, after the missing Sung Il-Hwan returned home safely, Park Kyung-Hye and Sung Jinah, who had been worried about him, finally calmed down. Of course, that didn't mean all the problems were solved. Sung Jinwoo and Cha Hae-In, their precious family members, were still missing, and their worries couldn't help but grow even more after this incident. But the solution was actually quite simple. Suho used the key to the Shadow Dungeon on them without hesitation.

"...!"

"...These memories?!"

Park Kyung-Hye and Sung Jinah, who suddenly regained all their memories from their past lives, were temporarily in shock, but soon accepted the truth. Suho honestly told

them everything about Sung Jinwoo and Cha Hae-In's whereabouts. Of course, that didn't erase all their worries, but at least it prevented them from having vague and endless anxieties like before.

[Little Monarch, are you sure this is alright?] Beru looked a bit concerned as he watched Suho's actions.

[If you restore people's memories indiscriminately like this, it could cause chaos in the world.]

Of course, Sung Jinwoo didn't give any specific instructions on how to use the key to the Shadow Dungeon when he handed it over to Suho. He only advised that it would be good to restore Yoo Jinho's memories, as he could provide the most practical help to Suho, but the rest was entirely up to his discretion. Even so, if he restored everyone's memories indiscriminately, some might use this knowledge for evil deeds, and above all, some might be exploited by Itarim. But Suho confidently dismissed Beru's concerns.

"So what if it's indiscriminate?"

[Kiek?]

"I can't let my family worry about my father's life and death, can I? Besides..." Suho looked at Beru with a serious gaze. His eyes were burning hotter than ever.

"I don't like the fact that people in this world have forgotten all about my father. If I could, I'd make everyone in the world remember him again, but I'm holding back."

3

[...] Beru couldn't say anything, feeling Suho's sincerity.

As he said, people in this world had completely forgotten that Sung Jinwoo saved Earth long ago. Suho's wish was that everyone would at least remember his father's noble and selfless sacrifice, even if they couldn't all be grateful... While speaking, he was recalling his recent battle against the Dragon Emperor.

'I've always been curious since I was young. How my father got that burn scar on his hand.' Suho had vaguely realized the greatness of his father, who fought a war alone against the terrifyingly dangerous Dragon Emperor and emerged victorious. That's why he made up his mind.

"Therefore, I'll continue to make as many people as possible remember my father whenever I get the chance."

He realized. "No matter how I think about it, that's the only 'gift' I can prepare before going to see him."

[...] Beru was crying.

That's right. A gift. The single word Suho had muttered to himself when he first encountered Itarim's apostle. Beru, who had walked alongside Sung Jinwoo for a long time, was deeply moved by Suho's sincerity. He had been thinking about what he could do for his father since then...

Hot tears streamed down the shadow ant's face. Endlessly.

CREATORS' THOUGHTS



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