

# Solo Leveling: Ragnarok [FAN TL] Chapter 273 - Chapter 271

## Chapter 273: Chapter 271

Yoo Jinho and Harmakan's collaboration brought about greater synergy than expected.

[Hmm, virtual reality... you're saying this thing stimulates the human brain?]

"That's right. It's a device that allows you to experience a new world using brainwaves."

[Hmm.] Harmakan, who began to examine the virtual reality capsule in earnest, had a strange expression.

[Hmmm.] Yoo Jinho looked at him and asked,

"Why that expression?"

[...This game capsule, you said it worked even before the Cataclysm without magic stones?]

"Yes. Magic stones appeared on Earth after the Cataclysm. Before that, it was a device developed purely with human technology. To explain the basic principle simply..."

Yoo Jinho, who directly participated in the development as CEO, answered Harmakan's questions without hesitation. But the more he listened, the stranger Harmakan felt.

[This really... was made by humans without magic power?]

"What are you trying to say?"

[This virtual reality you created... Hmm.]

After completely disassembling a capsule and checking its structure, Harmakan suddenly closed his mouth and fell into deep thought. And then he came to a conclusion.

[No. I'll have to go in and check myself to give you a definite answer.]

"You're going to enter virtual reality yourself? As a shadow soldier?" Yoo Jinho responded with surprise at the unexpected words,

"That's impossible. This game capsule is a device that uses human brainwaves. But you're already a dead soul without a separate body, how can that be possible?"

[It will probably work. If what I'm thinking is correct.]

"...Hmm?" Yoo Jinho couldn't help but assume a strange expression at Harmakan's confident words.

The relationship between the soul and brainwaves. It was still an unsolved mystery even in the scientific community. First of all, the soul itself was a field that was difficult to prove scientifically. But many scientists claimed that they would eventually be able to verify it one day. There was a time when people believed that thunder falling from the sky was a punishment from God. And as time passed, human science finally proved that it wasn't. Similarly, many scientists claimed that even though it was impossible now, in the future, they would be able to scientifically prove the soul and the afterlife. Yoo Jinho himself had asked Harmakan for cooperation with half doubt after hearing that the demonic spirits were a race that used evil spirits for magic. But Harmakan was cooperating with him much more actively than he expected.

[Do I just wear this on my head and lie down?] Harmakan opened the lid of the game capsule and picked up the brainwave helmet inside. Yoo Jinho replied with a hesitant expression,

"Yes. After wearing that on your head, you need to adjust the muscle setting values..."

[That's not necessary.]

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"Should I ask the production department to make a helmet that fits you?"

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The game capsule started up.

Originally, the brainwave helmet would start measuring the brainwaves of the user lying in the capsule and adjust the synchronization with the virtual reality. And when the loading was complete, their consciousness would connect to the virtual reality provided by Beautiful World...

[Connecting.]

Whoosh—!

"...?!" Yoo Jinho's eyes widened. Harmakan's giant body was suddenly sucked into the helmet!

"M-monitor!"

Yoo Jinho, startled, hurriedly turned on the monitor that showed the virtual reality Harmakan entered.

Flash!

And surprisingly, there...

[Hmm. As I thought.]

The shadow magic spirit with black steam blazing. Harmakan, who was sucked into the capsule, was standing there in the white virtual reality!

Flash! Flash!

Magic circles unfolded in his hands inside the monitor. Harmakan, manipulating those magic circles, raised his head. And incredibly...

[Hey. Can you see me?]

"...?!"

Harmakan was looking directly at Yoo Jinho, who was watching from outside the monitor, and spoke to him.

Shiver. Goosebumps erupted all over Yoo Jinho's body.

"H-how?!"

This was absurd. Even for a magic spirit, how could he look outside the monitor while connected to virtual reality?! But Harmakan replied with an unconcerned expression,

[That's why I said, instance dungeons are my specialty.]

"What? What do you..." Yoo Jinho's expression hardened at those words.

Harmakan looked around the virtual reality surrounding him inside the monitor, then finally nodded and said,

[I'm sure. This isn't virtual reality. It's an instance dungeon using the dimensional gap.]

"...?!"

"What?! It's not virtual reality? What we created..."

[I have no intention of arguing with a human about this. This is an instance dungeon.] Ignoring Yoo Jinho's reaction, Harmakan looked him straight in the eye from inside the monitor and asked bluntly what he was curious about,

[So I'll ask. Did you really create this game capsule?]

"O-of course. Our developers put in all their effort..."

[No, you're wrong. I'll ask again. Think back. Did you really design this system? Did no one really help you during the development phase?]

"Help? We were the first in the world, how could we have received outside help..."

Of course, he retorted first. Beautiful World was undoubtedly the world's first virtual reality game. Who could have helped them design that system?

"Of course, our researchers all worked together to..." But Yoo Jinho's voice gradually lost confidence.

At the same time, he desperately tried to recall memories of the development phase. It was a time when the world was still peaceful. Long before the Cataclysm that turned it upside down. When Yoo Jinho's business, Ahjin Soft, was just an ordinary game company that only released computer games... He recalled the faces of the developers who worked with him on the virtual reality game back then one by one. Then he stopped.

"...Huh?" Yoo Jinho's expression suddenly stiffened. Chills ran down his spine.

"What is this?"

Something was wrong. Among the researchers that came to mind, there were faces whose memories were particularly blurry. It was as if they were completely erased. As if someone had forcibly scribbled over his memories! There was someone among the researchers whose features he couldn't clearly remember. And it wasn't just one, but several!

"Uh? Uhh?"

'...No!' It wasn't just their faces that were strange! Even the silhouettes of those wearing the same lab coats as the other researchers were far from ordinary humans. That appearance was like...!

"The demonic spirits?!"

[Yes. That's correct.] Harmakan nodded.

Yoo Jinho finally succeeded in recalling the blank memories. Actually, this wasn't his first time having this experience. The Shadow Key that Suho handed him before. The feeling of remembering the memories of a time that no longer existed with its help. Perhaps thanks to that, Yoo Jinho succeeded in retrieving the memories that 'someone intentionally erased' with just a brief conversation with Harmakan. And those memories... Contained a shocking truth.

[In the first place, this ability isn't something mere humans can handle. It's magic used by the demonic spirits, who deal with souls.]

"...Souls?"

[Yes. Souls, not brainwaves.] Harmakan nodded.

[This device was originally created as a magic circle to temporarily extract the soul from a living body. A magical device that indirectly allows you to experience an instance dungeon.]

"...?!" Yoo Jinho's jaw dropped in shock.

"Don't tell me... you're talking about an out-of-body experience?"

[That's a good expression. But this is a much safer method. Dimensional coordinates are firmly fixed within this game capsule so that the soul can return to the body. So, to be precise, it's more accurate to call it a 'dream' than an out-of-body experience.]

"...Lucid dream." Yoo Jinho muttered in a trance.

'Lucid Dream'

In other words, a conscious dream. A phenomenon where you dream while being aware that you are dreaming. In the end, what Harmakan was saying was that this virtual reality game, the masterpiece of Ahjin Soft, was actually developed from the beginning to summon souls and make them have lucid dreams. And that was done with the help of the unknown magical race!

"...Why?" At this moment, What Yoo Jinho was most curious about was the reason.

"Why were there members of the demonic spirit race among our researchers? It was long before the Cataclysm on Earth."

Those monsters who were mixed among the numerous researchers without anyone noticing! For what reason did they help his company? What was their motive?!

[Hmm. You don't know the reason...? I think I do.] Harmakan's lips curled up slightly as he leisurely walked around the empty virtual reality beyond the monitor, as if he didn't care about Yoo Jinho's shock. He recalled old memories and muttered,

[During the war against the Rulers long ago, our magic world was eventually destroyed. Most of our race, who lost the war, died, or barely survived by scattering like me.]

Rustle

Harmakan raised his hand, where black steam was blazing, and continued,

[But now that I'm finally dead, I understand. For the demonic spirits, who deal with souls, death is a blessing. The moment you become a shadow soldier, you can research magic of a much higher quality than in life.] As he clenched his bony hand into a fist, a new magic circle unfolded on top of it. Playing with it with his fingertips, Harmakan's gaze turned to Yoo Jinho again.

[Don't you understand yet? If there were demonic spirits who secretly helped you with your work, who would be behind them?] Yoo Jinho finally realized the answer himself.

It was a brief memory that flashed through his mind.

– You're making a virtual reality game these days?

– Yes, brother! It's almost complete! We're having some trouble with the final stage of space implementation, but if we can solve that, it will be the birth of the world's first virtual reality game!

"...Brother." The name that escaped his lips like a sigh, Sung Jinwoo.

Clink!

A small gathering over drinks. In that memory, there was Yoo Jinho, confidently expressing his ambition while drinking soda in front of Sung Jinwoo.

– Ha! Isn't it amazing just to imagine? When the game is complete, I'll let you try it first, brother!

– What? Me first? Isn't that dangerous?

– Dangerous? Of course. I'll go in with you!

– You too?

– Of course! The world's first! Just the two of us entering virtual reality together!

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...

Yoo Jinho at that time shouted confidently towards Sung Jinwoo, who chuckled and replied,

– So just trust and follow me, brother! I'll protect you!

– ...Well, that sounds fun.

What was the expression on his brother's face at the end of that short conversation? He couldn't remember exactly, but Yoo Jinho thought that what was contained in those eyes was probably 'longing.'

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– Yes. Do your best. I'll be rooting for you.

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The Shadow Monarch's support. Was it really just verbal? Yoo Jinho, who had now regained the memories of a time that no longer existed, vaguely speculated about that day's memory. And there was one thing he was finally sure of. Perhaps even the desire he suddenly felt to create a virtual reality game was the result of his unconscious mind vaguely longing for a memory he didn't even know. And perhaps even his brother...

\* \* \*

And at that time,

Whoosh—!

Suho was relentlessly advancing north. With his Shadow Army.

Defeating all enemies that appeared before him.

[Level Up!]

[Level Up!]

[...]

It was a bountiful harvest of levels.

'It was a good decision to enter North Korea.' He felt truly refreshed.

Having come to North Korea, he could just hunt without worrying about troublesome things like the Hunter law or conflicts between guilds. This endless battle was probably his first since 'that time.'

'Level-up dream'

The dream that his father created to test him. It was terribly difficult back then, but looking back, it was also a time when he truly felt alive, breaking free from his boring daily life.

"Another one."

Rumble—!

The ninth Elvenwood crumbled before him.

*CREATORS' THOUGHTS*



Craftyprogamer

## **Solo Leveling: Ragnarok [FAN TL] Chapter 272 - Chapter 270**

### **Chapter 272: Chapter 270**

'Beautiful World'

The project that made Ahjin Soft the global company it was today, and the world's first virtual reality game. At the time, when Yoo Jinho decided on this name, all the employees opposed it, saying it was cheesy, but what it was called didn't really matter. The world's first, that alone was enough. Moreover, Beautiful World was a long-lasting game that was still consistently popular even after 20 years. It simply couldn't fail. Various content utilizing the platform, open-world sandbox, and sustainable gameplay. All of that, realized in virtual reality, was truly 'beautiful' with its innovative stimulation. And that craze was still going strong even today.

The veteran gamers were called 'Beautiful Uncles.' The people young when it was released were now middle-aged, and those who were middle-aged were now elderly. But despite that, they were still the main consumer base, actively enjoying the game even after 20 years. The game industry couldn't help but pay attention to this, calling it a truly exceptional phenomenon. And at the same time, they pointed out one thing as the reason for its long-lasting popularity. The development of the 'game capsule.'



Yoo Jinho poured all the technology he could into the 'game capsule,' a device essential for users to access the virtual reality game. And that engineering wasn't limited to just the game's performance; he also put a great deal of effort into the 'environment' where the game was played. Highly advanced ergonomic fluffiness and a full-body massage function. The comfort of relaxing and loosening up the muscles of the whole body just by lying down without playing the game, and even the effect of muscle training through minute electrical stimulation. It was so effective that even those with turtle necks or herniated discs could get meaningful rehabilitation effects just by lying still in the game capsule. And there was no need to worry about eye strain since it was a virtual reality game enjoyed with eyes closed.

The future is already here. This was the catchphrase Yoo Jinho used when he released Beautiful World. But the game capsule he created wasn't without its drawbacks. As much as he wanted to improve the device, the price would also become ridiculously high. But that problem was unexpectedly solved quickly.

– The price is a problem? Then just rent it out.

– B-brother?!

It was Sung Jinwoo. Yoo Jinho had a shocked expression at the casual remark.

'Capsule rental service'

That's right. In short, a subscription service. He was so focused on development that he missed that simple solution!

– As expected of you, brother! How did you come up with such a brilliant idea...!

– Everyone's doing it, it's not that brilliant. There's an ant in my house who's addicted to Netflix.

– ...Ant? Are there bugs in your house these days, brother?

– Hmm. Quite a lot.

– Should I send you a pest control team contracted with our company?

– No... They would die.

– Huh? Of course they'll die, they're bugs.

– No, the people.

– ...Hmm?

Anyway, the capsule rental service that started with Sung Jinwoo's advice truly gave wings to Ahjin Soft.

– Don't buy, rent!

– We even provide AS and on-site service!

And Yoo Jinho took it a step further.

– Ah, and let's rent to other companies too!

It was from then that the era of virtual reality games truly began. Yoo Jinho didn't just rent game capsules to users, but generously lent them to other game companies as well. We will focus on further research and development of the capsules. So that users can play games more comfortably and conveniently. So please enjoy other games to your heart's content in 'our capsules.'

'Capsules belonged to Ahjin Soft' Since Ahjin Soft held all the patents for game capsule technology and systems, other game companies focused on developing virtual reality content that generated immediate profit rather than making huge investments to surpass that technology. Just like Apple, which surprised the world with the iPhone long ago, Ahjin Soft also quickly grew into a giant company.

But then, the Cataclysm suddenly struck Earth. The world was shocked as Gates opened and magical beasts from other dimensions invaded. The game industry faltered. Who would play games when they were about to die? But a crisis was also an opportunity. Thanks to various Hunters around the globe, including Woo Jinchul, humanity quickly adapted to the changed world. And Ahjin Soft had another opportunity to leap forward.

'Eternal Sleep Disease'

The mysterious sickness that began with the Cataclysm. Curing that disease was a task for the medical field to solve in the future, but until then, they needed a device to keep those who fell into Eternal Slumber alive. And people found the solution in Ahjin Soft without prompting. That's right. The 'game capsule.'

The game capsule, which was made by stuffing all sorts of medical equipment into it for comfortable gaming, could function as a 'life support device' for Eternal Sleep Disease patients. Moreover, now that it had been modified to use magic stones instead of electricity as fuel, the synergy effect was undeniable.

"...That's what I'm saying. So." There was only one reason why Yoo Jinho passionately explained his company to Cha Hae-in like this.

"It doesn't matter how many people you bring from North Korea. We have plenty of life support devices in our warehouse."

Thud! Thud! Thud—!

Behind him, numerous employees were already unloading 'game capsules' from a giant truck. Since he bought all the empty buildings, they had plenty of 'hospital rooms'. And there were more than enough life support devices for the North Korean survivors.

"Suho. We adults will take care of the rest, so you just focus on rescuing people." Suho nodded at Yoo Jinho's reassuring words and immediately returned to North Korea to find a new Elvenwood.

"Now then..." Yoo Jinho turned his head.

He saw the reporters who had flocked to Yangpyeong. And now, it was Yoo Jinho, not Cha Hae-in, who had to do the interview. If Cha Hae-in was the face with a positive image, Yoo Jinho confidently declared himself as the person in charge of all this,

"We don't need government support or cooperation from other hospitals. Ahjin Soft will directly provide unsparing care for the North Korean survivors."

Yoo Jinho, doing the interview, now wore the mask of a thorough businessman. And he calmly responded to the reporters who bombarded him with questions,

"Please understand that I can't answer every question due to time constraints. All I have to say is that I'm truly grateful. Thanks to the users who support Ahjin Soft, we can do something meaningful for humanity without worrying about money. So I'll give all the credit to our users, not us."

Flash Flash Flash Flash Flash—!

Yoo Jinho's eyes didn't waver in the slightest in the face of the camera flashes. And with that, the reporters began to spread numerous news articles on the internet. The titles were obvious.

– Meaningful work for humanity!

– All credit to the users!

And his interview was enough to move the hearts of all users who loved virtual reality. That was his intention in the first place.

'...The company's stock price will go up.' Yoo Jinho thought with a shameless expression. Yes, this was right. If you did an act of kindness, you had to boast about it.

'I'll take credit for my own good deeds.'

\* \* \*

Afterwards...

Yoo Jinho's expression after finishing the interview still didn't relax.

'...Yes. If you do a good deed, you have to boast about it.' Reiterating his thoughts, he looked at the North Korean survivors who were safely recovering in the game capsules. Seeing them, a quiet anger gradually built up in his heart.

'...Brother.' Thanks to Suho, Yoo Jinho regained all his old memories. Most of those memories were of Sung Jinwoo. Memories of the brother he still respected the most, even though he was living a new life.

...That was why he was so angry. Because Yoo Jinho was the one who watched Sung Jinwoo's life from closer than anyone else.

"Itarim, was it?" Yoo Jinho's eyes burned with quiet rage and he gritted his teeth

Yes.

The Sung Jinwoo he remembered, that dependable figure, was always alone.

The Sung Jinwoo he saw always fought alone.

In a place no one knew. To protect the world.

And the noble peace he achieved was broken again like this.

"Because of those bastards, the peace that my brother worked so hard to protect was broken again."

Yes. That was what angered him the most. That his brother's efforts were in vain. Rage surged. So he vowed.

"I will never forgive you."

He was no longer the naive young man from back then. He had no intention of just watching from behind like that time.

"Harmakan." As he muttered through gritted teeth,

Rustle.

The shadow mage that Suho left behind. Harmakan, whom Yoo Jinho specifically asked to leave here, rose from beside him.

[Yes, what do you want me to do?] Harmakan had a slightly dissatisfied expression. To have to carry out the orders of a mere human, not his master. But Yoo Jinho's next request was enough to pique his interest.

"Suho said you're good at using strange magic."

[Yes, I'm the best when it comes to magic. What do you want? Curse? Evil spirit?]

"Not that." Yoo Jinho's gaze was fixed on the numerous game capsules before him. He was looking at the North Korean survivors lying quietly inside, unconscious.

"Actually, the reason why we have so many of these capsules in our warehouse is that they're new products that are about to be released. They're new models that allow the use of magic power inside, for the 'Solo Leveling' project that Hunters will use for virtual reality training."

[Oh. Even the use of magic power?] Harmakan's eyes flashed at those words. He immediately understood what Yoo Jinho was trying to say.

"Can you modify these capsules with your magic?"

[How?]

"So that the minds of these survivors can awaken in virtual reality."

[You're saying to bring back the souls that have gone to the Sea of The Afterlife to their bodies?]

"Why? Is it difficult?"

[Of course it's difficult. But...] Scanning the structure of mana flowing within the game capsule, Harmakan had a meaningful smile.

[Did you know? Even at this moment, countless shadow soldiers are sailing the Sea of The Afterlife on ships. All those soldiers are connected to each other with coordinates centered on Master.]

"What does that mean?"

[It means that a place where dimensional coordinates are fixed is no longer an unknown dimension. If it's just for the souls that the soldiers personally found there... it might be possible to modify them to be summoned to your virtual reality.]

"That's good news. Then can you also summon the last memories or situations they saw to virtual reality?"

[That's much easier than summoning souls. Instance dungeons are my specialty.]

While conversing, Harmakan looked at the human before him who made such a bold request. His magic power was only D-rank by human standards. He was a hunter who would normally be considered insignificant. But... Wasn't this quite something? Harmakan's eyes gleamed meaningfully.

[Your goal wasn't just to cure Eternal Sleep Disease. The real objective is to grasp the identity of the enemies our Master will face in the future through their memories.]

"And even their strategies."

Grin. Yoo Jinho and Harmakan's gazes met in the air. His lips curled into a fearsome smile as he reaffirmed his resolve,

"This time, I will not let him fight alone."

*CREATORS' THOUGHTS*



Craftyprogamer

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Rustle

Harmakan raised his hand, where black steam was blazing, and continued,

[But now that I'm finally dead, I understand. For the demonic spirits, who deal with souls, death is a blessing. The moment you become a shadow soldier, you can research magic of a much higher quality than in life.] As he clenched his bony hand into a fist, a new magic circle unfolded on top of it. Playing with it with his fingertips, Harmakan's gaze turned to Yoo Jinho again.

[Don't you understand yet? If there were demonic spirits who secretly helped you with your work, who would be behind them?] Yoo Jinho finally realized the answer himself.

It was a brief memory that flashed through his mind.

– You're making a virtual reality game these days?

– Yes, brother! It's almost complete! We're having some trouble with the final stage of space implementation, but if we can solve that, it will be the birth of the world's first virtual reality game!

"...Brother." The name that escaped his lips like a sigh, Sung Jinwoo.

Clink!

A small gathering over drinks. In that memory, there was Yoo Jinho, confidently expressing his ambition while drinking soda in front of Sung Jinwoo.

– Ha! Isn't it amazing just to imagine? When the game is complete, I'll let you try it first, brother!

– What? Me first? Isn't that dangerous?

– Dangerous? Of course. I'll go in with you!

– You too?

– Of course! The world's first! Just the two of us entering virtual reality together!

1

...

Yoo Jinho at that time shouted confidently towards Sung Jinwoo, who chuckled and replied,

– So just trust and follow me, brother! I'll protect you!

– ...Well, that sounds fun.

What was the expression on his brother's face at the end of that short conversation? He couldn't remember exactly, but Yoo Jinho thought that what was contained in those eyes was probably 'longing.'

1

– Yes. Do your best. I'll be rooting for you.

1

The Shadow Monarch's support. Was it really just verbal? Yoo Jinho, who had now regained the memories of a time that no longer existed, vaguely speculated about that day's memory. And there was one thing he was finally sure of. Perhaps even the desire he suddenly felt to create a virtual reality game was the result of his unconscious mind vaguely longing for a memory he didn't even know. And perhaps even his brother...

\* \* \*

And at that time,

Whoosh—!

Suho was relentlessly advancing north. With his Shadow Army.

Defeating all enemies that appeared before him.

[Level Up!]

[Level Up!]

[...]

It was a bountiful harvest of levels.

'It was a good decision to enter North Korea.' He felt truly refreshed.

Having come to North Korea, he could just hunt without worrying about troublesome things like the Hunter law or conflicts between guilds. This endless battle was probably his first since 'that time.'

'Level-up dream'

The dream that his father created to test him. It was terribly difficult back then, but looking back, it was also a time when he truly felt alive, breaking free from his boring daily life.

"Another one."

Rumble—!

The ninth Elvenwood crumbled before him.



Craftyprogamer

## **Solo Leveling: Ragnarok [FAN TL] Chapter 274 - Chapter 272**

### **Chapter 274: Chapter 272**

The problem occurred at the tenth one. The tenth Elvenwood, found using Sirka's Ice Golem as a compass, had a significantly different structure from the previous ones.

"...What is this?"

[...Kieek?] It was enough to surprise not only Suho but also Beru.

"A fortress?"

It was a strange sight. If the previous Elvenwoods were forest villages that seemed like they could exist only in fairy tales, the city that appeared before Suho and his party now was surrounded by high walls like a fortress.

[There is no barrier or perception-impairing magic around.]

As Beru said, unlike before, there was no dome-shaped transparent barrier around this Elvenwood. There was a blue mist obscuring the surroundings, but there was no trace of perception-impairing magic. Instead, solid walls made of stone, cement, and steel, showing signs of human intervention, protected the city.

[...Master, shall we attack?] Que, who always led the charge, hesitated and looked at Suho.

"..."

[Another, ahem. Elvenwood is visible over there.]

The tip of Que's sharp spear pointed towards the giant tree standing tall in the center of the fortress surrounded by bulwarks. Although the tree trunk was half-hidden by the high walls, it was definitely Elvenwood. The proof was the spirit birds wandering around it. They were leisurely flying over the fortress like ordinary birds in the city, or perched on the branches of Elvenwood, grooming their feathers. Sirka looked at Suho.

"Suho, what should we do?"

"Hmm. Let's think about it for a moment. Where is this place roughly? We already passed Pyongyang..."

First, Suho tried to figure out the approximate location of this fortress. Actually, he hadn't been curious about the names of the cities he passed through. What was the point of knowing the names in the first place? The terrain of North Korea had been randomly changed due to rampaging spirits and weather anomalies. The places that used to be cities now had lava flowing through them. The places that used to be mountains were split in half and turned into lakes. So the direction of movement was more important than the exact location, however in this case, he wanted to know at least the name. But he couldn't see any signs on the walls. First of all, he had never heard of a fortress city surrounded by high walls like this existing in the middle of North Korea.

[My liege, it's getting dark.] Beru, looking at the setting sun, urged Suho to make a decision.

But he couldn't make up his mind. This was the first time the high elves didn't come out to greet them, even though Sirka was leading the way.

'Could it be that there are no elves inside?' Just then, something caught Suho's eye as he calmly observed the fortress.

"...People?" Suho's eyes sparkled.

It was 'humans'. Looking closely, it wasn't elves but ordinary humans walking on the walls lit by the sunset. And they were armed guards, like soldiers.

"A human-inhabited Elvenwood? Alright, I've decided. Let's go in directly."

[Yes! Then we'll break down the walls!]

[Umuu!]

[Snort!]

Que, Mino, and Tau stepped forward confidently as if they had been waiting for those words.

"Why? There's no barrier anyway, let's just walk in."

[Yes! Then we'll destroy the gates...!]

"Go back in."

[...] Sulking, the soldiers disappeared into the shadows with disappointed expressions at Suho's words.

"Sirka, let's go in by ourselves and assess the situation. We need to get a feel for what kind of place this is."

"Hmm. Then I'll leave the Ice Golem behind too." Just like that, only Suho and Sirka approached the entrance of the fortress. On foot.

Among the shadow soldiers, only Beru followed quietly, peeking his head out from above Suho's shadow.

\* \* \*

"Who's there!" As they approached the large gate, the gatekeepers blocked their path. Suho tilted his head.

'Korean?' This was strange. There wasn't a hint of a North Korean accent in the gatekeepers' speech.

'Korean gatekeepers? In the middle of North Korea?' Suho casually spoke to the guards,

"Hello. What is this place?"

"What, you're South Korean?" The gatekeepers also recognized their compatriot as soon as they heard his accent and had slightly relieved expressions. They even seemed a little happy. Was it because they met fellow countrymen in this foreign land...? But despite that, they were still faithful to their duty.

"How did South Koreans get here?" They pointed their sharp spears at Suho and Sirka and asked questions. Suho answered honestly,

"How? We just walked."

"Walked? It's quite a distance from South Korea."

"We ran a little too." The conversation was a bit disjointed.

But in the meantime, the gatekeepers' eyes were scanning Suho and Sirka's attire. Although there were no visible wounds, their clothes were full of vivid signs of battle. They smelled of burning, as if they had passed through a path of lava. The captain of the guards asked,

"Is it just the two of you? Are there no other companions?"



"No."

"Someone go check."

"Yes!" At the captain's order, some of them personally ran in the direction Suho and Sirka came from to check if there were any others hiding and came back.

"What? Is it really just the two of you? But how did you get here? Are there really no other companions?"

"There were, but not anymore." Suho answered honestly. The gatekeepers' expressions became a bit solemn.

"...Did they all die?"

"Well, yes. That's right."

2

"...I see. That's..." They became even more solemn.

Of course, there was nothing incorrect about Suho's answer. It was true that the shadow soldiers were all dead. But the atmosphere became more and more serious with each answer.

"Hmm. Yes, you young man must have been through a lot."

"The way here must have been rough."

"But where did you get this elf? How did you catch it?"

'Catch an elf?' Suho's eyes sparkled quickly. The undertone was strange. The gatekeepers were looking at Sirka, who was standing blankly beside Suho, with curious eyes and whispering among themselves.

"She's a docile one."

"Her hair color is unique."

"She's so obedient even without a collar."

"Collar?" Suho was curious and interrupted their conversation to ask. But the gatekeepers found that even stranger.

"Huh? You don't know about collars? This, this..."

"Ah." When they took something out of their pockets, Suho couldn't help but nod. Because he knew the item well.

'Magic Restraint'

What they took out was none other than the 'electronic anklet' that the villains in Jisan Prison wore. It contained a very powerful micro-bomb designed to explode immediately if the anklet was subjected to impact or if the wearer used magic power. It was a very vicious restraint tool.

'Was it a device invented under the leadership of Association President Woo Jinchul in the early days of the Cataclysm?' He suddenly recalled what Baek Miho had told him. Actually, the Association President insisted that the bomb should be attached to the neck, not the ankle. That's right. At that time, Association President Woo Jinchul argued that it should be strong enough to blow off their heads if they used magic power to properly control villains. So its name during development was 'bomb collar.' But that proposal was eventually rejected due to human rights violations, and they settled on attaching it to the ankle.

'But why is that suddenly appearing here? And they're calling it a collar? Don't tell me they're using it on the neck here?' The more they talked, the more questions he had.

'Anyway, people who have this are either one of two things...' Villains or the Association. Or maybe another unknown group? Thinking that it was a good thing he didn't attack recklessly, Suho's gaze swept over the gatekeepers' necks and ankles. Naturally, there were no Magic Restraints attached to their bodies.

'Anyway, I have to give them some kind of answer so they won't be suspicious.' The gatekeepers seemed wary of Sirka, who wasn't wearing a 'collar.' The only reason their wariness was low was because of her cute appearance. A small, young elf who looked to be around ten years old. With her small body covered in thick silver hair down to her waist, she looked like a large hamster from behind. And most importantly, Sirka fundamentally didn't understand Korean. Cha Hae-In could communicate with her thanks to the necklace Sung Jinwoo gave her, and Suho could thanks to the system's effect, but she had been blankly watching from the side, not understanding anything the gatekeepers were saying. With a harmless expression.

3

Pat. Suho's hand ruffled Sirka's hair as he answered the gatekeepers' question.

"This one doesn't need a collar. I have a skill that works similarly to them."

"What? Skill?"

"Skill? What skill?" Seeing the gatekeepers' puzzled expressions, it seemed like it would be easier to just show them.

'Should I show them Gray? No, he has grown quite big recently, so they might be wary.' He decided. He would show them something that wasn't a shadow soldier and didn't look threatening at first glance.

"Ragnar."

Swoosh!

"...?!" The gatekeepers' eyes widened.

A small lizard suddenly appeared from Suho's hand!

"Beep?"

Dumb eyes. The small lizard with wings on its back opened its mouth wide on Suho's palm and looked around.

"Have you gained some weight?"

"Beep?"

Tilt?

As Suho said, Ragnar had recently gained some weight and looked healthy. It seemed like Antares was working hard behind the scenes to increase his magic capacity.

"What, a summoning skill?"

"Is he a summoner?"

The gatekeepers were slightly impressed by Suho's skill. There were many different skills in the world, but those were rare. Especially for summoners, a mediocre class among the support roles that didn't have the ability to protect themselves, it wasn't easy to survive in the apocalyptic wasteland that was North Korea.

"Then is this elf also your summon, not something you caught?"

"Well, it's similar. Should I unsummon it to enter the city?"

"No, there's no need for that. I'll lend you this collar, so put it on her neck. Make sure to return it when you leave."

"...Thank you." Suho accepted the 'collar' from the gatekeeper and thought,

It was fortunate that Sirka didn't understand Korean. Suho casually put the collar on her neck. But he didn't activate the lock and bomb, so she could take it off herself anytime. The gatekeepers finally lowered their spears that were pointed at Suho.

"So what is this place?"

"Why ask? You'll see when you go in." The gatekeepers lowered their guard and opened the gate.

Whoosh—

The moment the door opened he saw a dazzling neon sign.

[LAST PARADISE]

"...Huh?" Suho was genuinely bewildered.

The North Korean land where the darkness of night had fallen. In the middle of the hell that was the apocalypse, Under the shadow cast by the giant tree, Elvenwood, the divine tree of the elves... A city adorned with colorful neon signs unfolded.

"Welcome... Welcome to 'Paradise', the last oasis left in North Korea."

*CREATORS' THOUGHTS*



Craftyprogamer

## **Solo Leveling: Ragnarok [FAN TL] Chapter 275 - Chapter 273**

### **Chapter 275: Chapter 273**

"..." Suho was speechless. What was the first impression of the city that unfolded before his eyes?

'...Chinatown?'

Of course, there were various Chinatowns, but this one was quite scruffy and dark. Colorful neon signs. A chaotic and disorderly street. Shabby walls covered in mold. And the people gathered in the corner of the stone wall, puffing out cigarette smoke, had somewhat haggard expressions.

"Oh, right! I had the same expression!" The guard captain chuckled again seeing Suho's face.

"Why? Are you surprised? Everyone who comes to this city for the first time has the same reaction."

"..." As if taking pride in this city, the captain explained things Suho might be curious about without him even asking.

"To put it simply, this is a kind of Chinatown. There are South Koreans, North Koreans, Chinese, and even Russians living together."

As he said, the people walking around this chaotic city had a variety of appearances. Not only their looks but also their nationalities were diverse. The reason why there were people from other countries here was obvious. This place in North Korea was adjacent to China, Russia, and South Korea. But that aside, there were two things that Suho noticed. One...

[My liege, all the humans here have magic power.] Suho nodded silently at Beru's whisper.

'A city of Awakened ones' It was only natural, wasn't it? Could non-Awakened people even survive in North Korea until now? Most would have been killed by magical beasts, or eroded by magic power and burned to death as Mist Burns. The journey to reach this city would have been difficult even for Awakened ones. But this wasn't surprising. The second thing that caught Suho's attention was the problem.

"You're curious about the collars on their necks, right?" As expected, he understood.

"...Yes."

The guard captain grinned as he saw what people Suho was looking at. Among those smoking, there were individuals wearing 'bomb collars.' But their shapes were slightly different from the one Sirka was wearing. 'Numbers' made of LEDs were flashing on the surface.

"That collar is different from the one we lent to your summon. It's a modified version with the magic restraint function removed, leaving only the bomb."

"The magic restraint function is gone?"

"Yes. Of course, it still explodes upon impact, so if you carelessly take it off, your head will be blown off."

"...?" Suho had a puzzled expression. They removed the magic restraint function from the device meant to restrain villains? Then what was that thing for?

"The purpose is completely different. It's called a 'Credit Choker'."

"Credit Choker? Credit... necklace?"

1

"No, a loan necklace."

Grin. The guard captain's smile, which had been friendly until now, turned cold for the first time.

"Those wearing the choker are all debtors. Those who haven't paid back their bank loans."

"Bank loans?"

"Yes. Are you confused? You'll get used to it soon. You'll need money to survive here anyway."

Just then, a substantial building appeared before them. A large signboard was attached to the front. The guard captain personally guided Suho and Sirka there.

[Paradise Bank]

"...Bank?"

"Yes, this is a place where people live, so you'll need money to at least buy food, right? And you'll need money for lodging if you want to sleep."

'Ah, so that's how it is.' Suho finally realized the identity of the inconsistency he sensed since entering this city. Despite his rough appearance, the guard captain was quite friendly to him. Except for the first encounter, the atmosphere was welcoming to the point of being overly friendly to an unknown outsider. Strange for a gatekeeper guarding the walls.

But now he understood... The original purpose of the high walls surrounding this city was to defend against magical beast invasions. But if it wasn't magical beasts, but people, Especially Awakened ones with enough power to come this far, this city had no choice but to welcome them.

"Other countries' currencies are useless here. Transactions are only made with coins that are used exclusively in our city. So those who come here for the first time, like you, have to borrow money from the bank first." Suho nodded.

"So we become debtors from the start."

"Right. But don't think too peculiarly about it. Everyone starts that way. Don't worry, you can pay back the debt quickly."

"...?" He was curious about how to repay that debt, but the question was soon resolved.

"Hey! Newbie alert!" The guard captain cheerfully threw open the bank door, and one of the employees inside, who was doing paperwork, recognized him and smiled brightly.

"Oh, Mr. Park Young-jun! Are you on guard duty today? You brought a new customer?"

"Hahaha! Yes, you punk! Give me my referral fee now!"

"Yes, sure. I'll give it to you right away. You're lucky. A newbie came on your shift." The employee's gaze quickly swept over Suho and Sirka standing beside the guard captain. And then, with a bright smile, he held out two documents to them.

"Welcome to Paradise! Here's the form for citizen registration, and the other is a loan agreement for your settlement funds."

"..."

Glancing at the documents, they were translated into Korean, Chinese, and Russian. For the citizen registration, he just had to write his name. The problem was the settlement funds. He understood that they were lending, not giving, the settlement funds, but the problem was the interest rate.

'The interest rate is crazy. Even loan sharks wouldn't charge this much.' An absurdly high interest rate. A bank that blatantly demanded such a rip-off loan. But considering the environment outside the city, it was only natural. If you didn't like it, you could just leave.... The proof was the reaction when Suho asked the employee after carefully reading the documents,

"Can I borrow the money later?"

"Yes, of course! We never force loans!"

Suho caught the employee's brows briefly furrowing, despite the friendly tone. But he quickly put on a bright face, glanced at the guard captain who brought Suho, and said in an apologetic tone,

"It's common for those visiting our city for the first time to feel repulsed by the Credit Choker. But don't worry too much. You'll be able to pay back the settlement funds quickly if you just complete a few requests from our bank."

"Requests?"

"Yes. In game terms, quests...? Hahahahaha, it seems like it's easier for young people to understand when I use games as an example. You get rewards for completing quests."

"Ah, give me my reward first!"

"For your information, guiding an outsider like this to the bank also grants a reward."

The guard captain, who had been asking for a referral fee, was getting impatient. The employee nodded and handed a few coins to the captain.

Clank.

"Okay, okay, here you go. It's not even that much for someone without any debt. Anyway, come back later for the loan. For now, just write your name on the citizen registration document and you can go." As the guard captain happily received the referral fee, he said to Suho,

"By the way, fake names are also allowed."

"...?" When Suho looked at him, the guard captain grinned and said,

"What, did you really come all the way here to foolishly write your real name?"

Suho's eyes widened at those words. It wasn't because he was told to register with a fake name in front of the employee, but because of what he said next.

"Woo Jinchul will come chasing after you and gobble you up."

"..."

"Tsk, no reaction? Kids these days."

Listening to that unfunny dad joke, Suho finally realized.

[My liege, this place...]

'Yes.' The true identity of this city. This was none other than the last settlement for the villains who successfully escaped to North Korea to avoid Association President Woo Jinchul.

'Then the Chinese and Russian people here must be villains who escaped from those countries.'

[Let's kill them all... Ah, but before that, we need Harmakan to get experience points from them...] Beru, who was quietly planning a massacre with wicked eyes, was disappointed to realize Harmakan's absence.

It wasn't a matter of just killing the villains they found. They had to have him surround the area with an instance dungeon first to gain experience points from them. If



Harmakan, who was temporarily left in South Korea, were here, he would have burned down this bank before even getting a loan.

"But you're really lucky, customer. Where did you catch that young elf?" The bank employee also showed curiosity towards Sirka, who was obediently following Suho, as they were leaving the bank.

"Well, now that I've told you about the bank's location and the Credit Choker, I've done my part for the referral fee... I'll just give you some advice." After leaving the bank, on the way back, the guard captain showed Suho around the city and said,

"There's no city hall here. First and foremost, it's a lawless zone, so no one will say anything even if you do whatever you want. However, if you act recklessly just because you have power, you'll vanish without a trace. Even Awakened people are defenseless when they sleep." He pointed to the main street that ran through the center of the city.

2

"On one side of this main street, the Chinese live, and on the other side, the Koreans live. The North Korean and Russian areas are over there. It's not that this place is strictly divided by nationality, but it's safer to sleep if you live with fellow countrymen. Of course, it's just a matter of feeling."

A lawless zone that was neither illegal nor unlawful. This meant that if someone suddenly attacked and tried to kill an individual sleeping in their quarters, no one could protect them.

"Be extremely careful of the debtors wearing chokers. Those with high numbers are really dangerous. You saw the interest rate, right? Their debt is constantly increasing every moment. And if they can't pay it back, they go boom!"

"So, if you don't want to die, you have to carry out the requests from the bank."

"If you don't want to pay a commission, you can trade directly. Barter is often more convenient if you don't have any debt."

Suho suddenly recalled the numerous request forms that were next to the bank employee. The contents varied, but to summarize, they were roughly like this:

- Elf hunting
- Magical beast hunting (edible)
- Retrieving appliances or furniture requested by the client from outside the city

Some of them were requests directly from the bank, but most were from people living in the city asking the bank for things they needed. And the institution received a commission in between. But what he was most curious about was the 'elf' part. Why were the people here hunting elves?

'I get it for me, but these people don't even get experience points, so why?' Suho asked the guard captain,

"I saw that the reward for catching elves was the highest, why do you hunt them?"

"Why? It's obvious..." The guard captain replied casually...

Pointing at the Elvenwood standing tall in the center of the city,

"Because there's no better fertilizer than elf corpses to grow that..."

"...!"

Suho instinctively covered Sirka's ears with his hands. Although she probably wouldn't have understood because it was Korean. And he turned his gaze back to Elvenwood. Come to think of it, there was one noticeable difference between the nine Elvenwoods he had found so far and the one here. It was the size. The Elvenwood growing in this city was twice as thick and large. Could the reason be...

"Strangely, you can find quite a few elves in this North Korean land. If you catch them and bury them in this land, Alfheim loves it." Suho asked,

"Is Alfheim the name of that tree?"

"Ah, are you weak in mythology?"

"I know the basics."

Alfheim.

He seemed to recall that the land of elves appearing in mythology was called that. ...Perhaps it was named that because it was effective for growing that tree. Well, the rationale behind the name wasn't important. More critically, Suho couldn't help but be concerned about one part of the guard captain's words.

"But what do you mean by growing that tree?"

"If you offer fertilizer to Alfheim and make it grow, it bears 'fruit'. There are no Healers in this city. So when we get hurt, we eat that 'fruit'. It greatly increases vitality and regenerative abilities. It can even do this."

The guard captain pointed towards a dark alley where debtors wearing chokers were gathered. And there... was a sight that was hard to call human. Suho, Sirka, and even Beru's expressions hardened.

"An arm..."

"...!"

[...]

It was only high-ranking Healers who could completely heal a severed arm. Moreover, there weren't even any low-ranking Healers living in this city. Then what should they do if their arm was cut off? An ordinary person would die from the bleeding alone. But among the debtors that the guard captain pointed at, there were those who stood out. Humans with giant magical beast arms attached to their shoulders where normal appendages should be.

1

"Amazing, right? If you eat the 'fruit,' you can even transplant magical beast body parts onto yourself." Suho finally saw the true nature of this city. The deep darkness that lay beneath the colorful neon signs that adorned it like a club district. The villains here were patchworks who prolonged their lives by transplanting monster parts onto themselves.

"We call those patchworks 'Enhanced Humans.' You too will probably go to the bank yourself and get a loan when you get hurt. To buy the 'fruit'."

*CREATORS' THOUGHTS*



Craftyprogamer

## **Solo Leveling: Ragnarok [FAN TL] Chapter 276 - Chapter 274**

### **Chapter 276: Chapter 274**

Suho finally saw the true nature of this city after hearing the guard captain's explanation.

'Last Paradise.'

A haven to villains, and at the same time, their last stronghold for survival. The 'Enhanced Humans' who survived in this city by eating the fruits of Elvenwood and replacing their injured body parts with those of magical beasts. And the existence of the

bank that imposed the shackles of debt on them, constantly assigning them dangerous and difficult tasks. Suho muttered,

"So that tree is the lifeline of this city."

"That's right. If it weren't for Alfheim, we would have all died long ago. Even if we're injured or sick from magical beast attacks or weather anomalies, we can survive as long as we have the fruit of that tree." The guard captain nodded and chuckled.

"Well, everyone gradually becomes a debtor and an Enhanced Human."

"The fruit..." Suho slowly raised his head and looked up at Alfheim.

It was so tall that his neck stiffened. Its circumference seemed like it would take dozens of people holding hands to encircle it. Compared to any of the Elvenwoods he had seen so far, the 'fattened' divine tree of the elves was overwhelmingly beautiful and exuded vibrant energy. But ironically, what surrounded the base of the Elvenwood in this city were the gray, old concrete buildings built by humans... That flashy yet dark, somewhat shabby and slum-like scenery was like looking at the Kowloon Walled City in Hong Kong. But if you looked at it from a slightly different perspective, this place was like...

'A giant flowerpot. This whole city.' Yes, a flowerpot. The structure of this city was like a giant planter that existed solely to grow a single tree and bear fruit. The only difference was that those who tended this flowerpot had changed from high elves to humans. In the end, the villains here were also being raised to live for Elvenwood, just like the elves. No, looking at the results, humans were actually better at growing Elvenwood. The proof was the fruit.

'There were no fruits on the Elvenwoods I've seen so far.' Actually, besides the size, there was one more difference in the appearance here. The color of the leaves. The branches of the Elvenwoods where the high elves lived always had fresh, green leaves. But the leaves here were a mixture of green and red, like autumn leaves about to fall.

"...Autumn has begun." Sirka, who was looking at the same scenery as Suho, muttered softly. Sillad agreed.

[King of the Snow Folk and the Monarch of Frost, says that the season of harvest has already arrived in this land.] Suho nodded at his comment.

The words of Sillad, who became a Monarch by enduring the harsh winter, contained more meaning than that. The seasons of the elves were a completely different concept from those on Earth. They flowed according to the growth of Elvenwood, regardless of the passage of time. It wasn't that autumn came and the fruits were born, But rather, because Elvenwood had grown enough to bear fruit, it was called autumn. Then, what would come next...

[King of the Snow Folk and the Monarch of Frost, declares that this city will soon perish.]

Sirka had already smelled a familiar scent the moment she set foot in this city. For her, who was born in the harsh cold, the winter of the elves was as familiar as home. So she could estimate when that winter would arrive.

"Winter will come soon."

3

"When all those leaves turn red. When all the leaves fall..." And that day would be the date this city would perish. Suho nodded at Sirka's words.

And he looked up at the fruits hanging at the end of the red leaves high above. Before Suho could even ask, the guard captain quickly answered,

"Yes, those are the 'fruits.' You could call it the blood of Alfheim." Suho nodded at the guard captain's words. As he described, even from afar, the fruits looked like red blood, round and plump, hanging from the branches.

"But..." The guard captain suddenly lowered his voice and said,

"Actually, harvesting those fruits isn't easy. It's extremely dangerous."

"Dangerous?"

"Yes. Alfheim is a tree, but it's also a living creature. You wouldn't like having your blood taken, would you?" Well, Elvenwood was originally a dangerous tree that directly consumed elves.

"So the bank also puts out requests to harvest Alfheim's fruits. Usually, it's the debtors who take them. Those with the chokers."

"The reward must be high."

"Of course. You have to risk your life and climb that tree yourself. If you fall in the middle, your back will be broken, and the branches and spirits often interfere." The guard captain explained with a grin. He also revealed his intention for explaining so kindly to Suho.

"But it's become even harder to harvest the fruit recently."

"Why?"

"Alfheim is getting stronger. More than half of those who go to harvest them don't return. Or they come back injured and end up eating the fruit they risked their lives to get." The guard captain spoke to Suho in a low voice,

"So, would you be interested in taking a fruit harvesting request?"

"Me?"

"Yes. You're a summoner, aren't you? You can just summon that lizard and make it climb the tree. There's no need to take any risks."

'Aha. So that's what it was.' Seeing the hopeful gleam in the guard captain's eyes, Suho finally realized why he had been so friendly.

"So you're saying that even though summoning skills are mediocre in battle, they're perfect for harvesting fruits? Besides, what are you going to do tonight? You'll have to sleep on the streets because you don't have money for food or lodging."

The guard captain had no doubt that Suho would accept his proposal. Originally, those who came to this city for the first time, like Suho, were reluctant to take out bank loans at first. But that only lasted a day or two.

"Don't forget. This city might look like this, but it's a dangerous place teeming with villains. In a situation where anyone can suddenly turn into a robber, it's better to have a fruit or two in advance in case you get hurt."

"So you're saying to harvest the fruit in advance."

"Yes. If you try to buy the fruit from the market after getting hurt, they'll suddenly raise the price. This is a lawless zone, so the market rate fluctuates."

"Hmm. I'll think about it."

"Hey, don't be so hesitant and think positively. If you're in danger while summoning under the tree, I'll protect you. I might look like this, but I'm a well-known tanker, enough to be the guard captain." What he ultimately wanted from Suho was a partnership. But the guard captain wouldn't even dream that Beru was chuckling in Suho's shadow while listening to his nonsense.

[Foolish human. Our liege has potions, why would he need that ominous fruit?]

2

"Anyway, think about it carefully, and let's talk again tomorrow. Your mind will change after spending a night on the streets." With those last words, he returned to his jurisdiction.

"Ah, and be careful of debtors when you sleep on the streets! Especially those with high choker numbers, they're merciless." Even as he was leaving, the guard captain couldn't let go of Suho and told him about a relatively safe alley to sleep in.

"He's kind until the end."

[He talks too much. Like an Explanation Bug.]

1

"...?" Suho's gaze briefly lingered on Beru. He chuckled and looked back at Sirka, asking,

"Well, anyway, shall we start looking for a place to sleep?"

"Place to sleep..." Sirka, who had been following Suho silently, because she didn't understand Korean, tilted her head.

[My liege, you're a noble person, why would you sleep on the streets? Just use Shadow Exchange and go to Korea to sleep comfortably.]

"Of course, we could do that." Beru's advice was truly wise. With a single skill use, a soft bed in Korea awaited them, so why bother suffering needlessly?

[And bring Harmakan with you on your way back.]

"That's true too."

[...] Beru tilted his head.

It seemed like Suho had no intention of following his advice. And his steps were already leading into the alley that the guard captain recommended as a good place to sleep.

[Are you really going to sleep on the streets?]

"No, but isn't this strange?" A mischievous smile appeared on Suho's lips as he entered the alley.

"The guard captain, that considerate man, he's also a villain who escaped from South Korea, but he's too kind."

[Kieek?]

Suddenly. The moment they entered the dark alley, Suho's eyes turned cold.

"...Yes, this is normal." Suho gave a chilling smile as he looked at those surrounding him.

The alley that the guard captain recommended was already occupied by guests who were waiting for Suho. Chokers around their necks. Patchwork beggars with monstrous arms transplanted. The most dangerous alley in the city, where the hyenas of the streets who preyed on newcomers gathered. And at the very back of them, the guard captain, who had been kind to Suho until the end, was sitting leisurely.

"Nice to see you again?"

"Ah, don't think too badly of me. There's one more request from the bank. To guide newcomers around the city. And to make them indebted to the bank." The guard captain waved with a sly smile from behind the debtors at Suho's greeting.

"I honestly think your skill is optimized for harvesting fruits. So I thought I should first tear off one of your arms so you'll need a fruit and listen to me." No wonder the bank employee gave the guard captain a look earlier. Suho chuckled as he realized the meaning of that glance.

"They said they don't force loans, but it seems like starting as a debtor is the national rule."

"Right. It's that kind of place. What are you all waiting for, attack him all at once!"

"...!" As soon as he finished speaking, the debtors of the city rushed towards Suho all at once, swinging the giant magical beast arms they transplanted onto their bodies.

[My liege, if you're going to kill these guys anyway, do it when Harmakan is here...]  
Beru's advice, concerned about experience points even in this situation, was touching. Suho chuckled and waved his hand lightly at those words.

"I know. But there's still something to check..."

Bang!

"...?!"

At Suho's light gesture, the giant fist of the villain that was charging towards him exploded like a balloon. Beyond the shocked expressions of the debtors, a look of something going wrong flashed in the guard captain's wide eyes.

"Aha?" Sirka, on the other hand, had a refreshed expression.

"I don't know what you're saying, but I understand this."



Whoosh—

An Ice Tree Spear appeared in Sirka's hand, who was previously staring blankly because she didn't understand Korean. And...

Crack—!

"...?!"

After one night in Alfheim, where autumn had just begun. A winter wind, arriving slightly early, froze the entire dark alley.

*CREATORS' THOUGHTS*



Craftyprogamer

## **Solo Leveling: Ragnarok [FAN TL] Chapter 277 - Chapter 275**

### **Chapter 277: Chapter 275**

Putting Sirka through such harsh training had paid off. Suho had now toppled a total of nine Elvenwoods. Countless high elves, clinging to their pathetic existences, had lost their lives in the process. The spirits that had been swarming inside their bodies like parasites scattered in a panic. Some even lunged at him like vengeful ghosts. But no matter what they did, the result was the same. All those spirits were eventually captured by Suho and burned to death, or were forced into submission by Sirka. Countless times. And the result was this:

Whoosh—!

It has descended.

Crackle—!

"...!"

A chilling frost, originating from Sirka's small body, instantly engulfed the dark alleyway. The Enhanced Humans, caught in the pure white blizzard, began to freeze one by one.

"Uwaaa!"

"W-What is this...!"

Screams of terror filled the air as the Enhanced Humans desperately tried to turn and flee, but it was already too late. Sirka's power of frost transformed the entire alley into an icy kingdom in the blink of an eye. Sharp icicles jutted out from the walls. They were frozen solid, faces contorted in terror. And then...

Crack! Crack! Crack—!

With the sound of ice cracking, the debtors' bodies began to crumble. The magical beast arms and legs grafted onto them shattered like ice sculptures.

"Kugh..."

They barely managed to break free from the ice, but their bodies were already in a terrible state. Some of them, their hands trembling from the cold, desperately pulled out the 'fruits' they had hidden in their pockets and shoved them into their mouths. But...

Whoosh—

"...?!"

[My liege, I think these are the fruits.] The fruits in their hands were all snatched away by Beru and brought to Suho.

Ding!

[Obtained Item: 'Contaminated Elvenwood Fruit'.]

"..."

Life slowly faded from the eyes of the Enhanced Humans as they stared blankly at the scene. And at that moment.

Kaboom!

[Kieek?]

The Credit Chokers around their necks began to explode simultaneously.

Kaboom!

Crash!

Bang! Bang—!

"...It seems they're designed to explode automatically when debtors die."

Suho was a little surprised by the considerable explosive power of the Credit Chokers. Even Sirka was startled and created a wall of ice to block the blast. And the corpses of the Enhanced Humans left behind were missing their heads.

[It would be best to avoid close combat when facing them in the future.]

And at that moment...

"N-no way..." The captain of the guard, who was watching the whole scene from the end of the alley, was the very picture of shock and terror.

What was happening? He couldn't believe it even though he was seeing it with his own eyes. Just a few seconds ago. No, just a second ago... A situation he could never have imagined unfolded before his eyes.

'I-I have to run...' The survival instinct in his mind was frantically sounding the alarm, urging him to flee. But his feet wouldn't move. It wasn't just because of fear. His ankles were firmly bound by Sirka's ice. And before him... inevitable death was approaching. He desperately tried to make excuses.

"N-no. This is a misunderstanding! I can explain everything! I was just, just...!"

Suho was approaching.

Slowly walking on the ice.

"I-it's true! I didn't really intend to kill you! Just enough to need the fruit...! It's just a custom... something everyone goes through...!" Incoherent excuses began to pour out from the terrified captain's mouth. Suho nodded and replied,

"Hmm, a misunderstanding... Well, that could be true. That you were overly friendly, and that I came all the way here." That made the captain of the guard even more terrified.

'Why didn't he know?' How could he only realize it now?! Come to think of it, that guy was always like this from the beginning. The villains who escaped to North Korea through the 38th parallel were usually full of malice or bloodlust, wary of everything. In this hell, you couldn't trust anyone. But that guy was different. He was so naive that he thought he was a sucker, obediently following him and receiving guidance. Like a tourist on vacation. And that attitude continued even now... Suho's nonchalant approach without a hint of killing intent was even more terrifying to the captain of the guard.

"W-wait! I'm useful! If you spare me, I'll tell you everything I know! There are many things you need to know to adapt to this city! If you kill me...!"

[Ah. Don't worry about that, kind villain. You'll be even kinder when you're dead.]

"...?!"

Shiver—!

Beru, who had approached him, patted his shoulder with the kindest expression in the world. The captain of the guard, terrified, suddenly pulled out two daggers that he had hidden as a trump card and threw them towards Suho's heart and neck.

Whoosh—!

"Die!"

But the daggers were a feint! Before they could even reach Suho, he unleashed all the attacks he could muster towards Suho in a frenzy.

"Kraaa! Don't come closer! Don't come any closer! If you kill me, you won't be safe either...!"

Stab—

"Ah, were you in the middle of a conversation? He suddenly attacked..."

"..."

Sirka, who had approached, stabbed the captain of the guard with her Ice Tree Spear and looked back at Suho with a harmless expression, apologizing. At the same time, life slowly drained from the captain's eyes, which were full of malice.

[Kieek! Master's precious experience points...] Beru was still complaining about experience points even though so many people had died, It was confusing who the real villains were. But Suho wasn't any better.

"They wouldn't have given me much experience points anyway." He didn't feel particularly guilty.

First of all, the villains who escaped to North Korea to avoid the Association were all those who deserved to die. If they had committed lesser crimes, there would be no reason to come to this cutthroat apocalypse on their own.

"Arise."

Suho extracted the shadows of the dead without hesitation.

[Shadow extraction successful.]

[Shadow extraction successful.]

[Shadow extraction successful.]

[...]

Aaaaa—!

In the cold alley where winter arrived a little early... Screams echoed from the shadows of the debtors whose heads were blown off by the chokers' explosions. And when they finally rose from death, The souls, of those who had been struggling to survive under the burden of debt, were no longer shackled by chokers.

[Shadow Enhanced Soldier Lv.1]

[Shadow Enhanced Soldier Lv.1]

[Shadow Enhanced Soldier Lv.1]

[...]

A strange light flickered in Suho's eyes as he looked at the new soldiers that appeared before him.

"The magical beast body parts transplanted onto their bodies remain even after death. Sita will be a little upset when he sees this."

[I agree. It's similar to the lizardmen that he perfected through experiments.]

Sita, who caused a commotion in India, saying he would strengthen humanity, modified humans into lizardmen after countless experiments. But although the principle was different for the villains here, the results were quite similar.

"Seeing that the changes in the body affect the soul, the effects of the 'fruit' must be greater than I thought." Suho carefully examined the 'fruits' that Beru retrieved. And an information window popped up.

[Item: Contaminated Elvenwood Fruit]

[Acquisition Difficulty: ??]

[Type: Consumable]

[Fruit of Elvenwood, the divine tree of the elves.]

[Upon consumption, temporarily amplifies recovery ability]

[But the seed of Elvenwood takes root in the body, causing permanent mutations.]

[Contaminated with an unknown energy.]

[Effect 'Recovery Amplification': Increases HP and MP recovery speed by 200%]

[Side Effect 'Erosion': Permanent damage to the body]

Suho made a disgusted face as he read the information.

"...If you eat this, Elvenwood takes root in your body? Is it like cordyceps? And what is it contaminated with?" No matter how much he looked at the information window, there was no specific information about the 'contamination.' Beru warned,

[I can faintly sense Itarim's energy. You absolutely must not eat it as is.]

"I won't." Suho had no intention of eating it anyway.

"How can I eat it after seeing that?" Suho pointed at the corpses of the Enhanced Humans.

Wriggle. Wriggle.

Their souls had turned into shadow soldiers, but thin roots were wriggling like tentacles in the wounds of the remaining corpses. The sight was quite grotesque, like looking at blood vessels without blood.

"Now I understand how they grafted magical beast body parts."

"It seems like the roots of Elvenwood forcibly intertwined the human and magical beast bodies from the inside." Sirka's expression also hardened.

"Sillad, was Elvenwood originally like this?"

[King of the Snow Folk and the Monarch of Frost, says he's never seen anything like this before.]

"Captain of the guard."

[Yes.] When Suho looked at the captain of the guard, who was now a shadow soldier standing before him, he responded with black steam rising from his body.

1

"What happens if you eat several of these fruits at once?"

[The effects stack.]

"How many?"

[I don't know exactly. It's a very expensive item, so they only eat several at once when they're fatally injured.]

"I see. It's a creepy fruit."

"In the end, the more you eat, the more roots of Elvenwood grow inside your body."

"It wouldn't be strange if you eventually become a walking tree."

Suho looked up at the sky. Beautiful branches and leaves covering the city's roof and ceiling. Blood-red fruits hanging at that dizzying height. Suho turned his gaze back to the captain of the guard and asked,

"Captain of the guard. Tell me everything you know about this city. Anything is fine."

[Yes. This city is largely divided into four factions. The first is the 'bank'. It looks like a simple financial institution on the surface, but it actually controls this city. Especially since it has control over the distribution of the fruit, it's at the center of all transactions.]

"And?"

[The second is the 'Hunter Guild.' It's a gathering of Enhanced Humans who have received magical beast body part transplants, and they're in charge of the city's actual combat power. Their main job is to earn fruits by carrying out the bank's requests. They also hunt magical beasts or procure supplies from outside the city, depending on the request.]

"Fruits? Is there a separate reason why they need to keep getting fruits?"

[The Enhanced Humans have strong pride, believing they have transcended humanity. So they obsessively want to transplant superior magical beast body parts onto themselves to become even stronger.]

"Hmm. Should we consider this an addiction as well?"

[Yes. That's an accurate expression. And the third is the 'Free Market Alliance'. It's a loose association formed by the city's merchants and debtors. It's not an official organization, but it accounts for a significant portion of the city's economy. They trade all items except for the fruit.]

"So the bank strictly controls the fruit."

[Yes. The fruits that the debtors harvest at the bank's request belong entirely to the bank. And when they get injured, they have to take out loans to buy the fruits they harvested with their own hands.]

"..."

Suho was silent for a moment. He recalled the face of the bank employee who welcomed him with a bright smile. Now that he thought about it, it wasn't the expression of welcoming a new customer, but a new slave.

"Then what's the last faction?"

[The 'Enforcers.']

"Enforcers?"

[Yes. The Enforcers act independently from other factions and maintain order in the city. They're not usually seen unless there's a special situation. I've only heard rumors, but it's said that there's even an S-rank villain among the Enforcers.]

"An S-rank villain?" A strange light flickered in Suho's eyes as he listened to the captain of the guard's explanation.

"No wonder the system is more organized than I expected for a lawless zone. So there are guys maintaining order behind the scenes?" But a strange thought suddenly occurred to him.

Suho looked around the ice-covered alley and asked, "When do the Enforcers appear? No one showed up even though we caused this much commotion."

[This is a city where villains gather... This level of commotion happens quite often.] Suho's lips curled up at those words.

"Then what do I have to do to make them show up?"

[My liege, wouldn't they come out if you killed all the villains here?] The captain of the guard shook his head at Beru's words.

[No... If the city falls, the Enforcers will leave to find a new home, as always. And they'll build a new city.]

"As always?"

[Yes. As I explained at the beginning, this city is the last paradise left in North Korea. There used to be more cities for villains. The Enforcers are those who escaped from those ruined cities and built a new city here.]



"Why did those cities fall?"

[It's obvious... Because of Association President Woo Jinchul.]

3

*CREATORS' THOUGHTS*



Craftyprogamer

## **Solo Leveling: Ragnarok [FAN TL] Chapter 278 - Chapter 276**

### **Chapter 278: Chapter 276**

Suho nodded at the guard captain's last words.

"Association President Woo Jinchul... No wonder the Association's North Korea strategy is taking longer than expected, so this is what was going on." Even Suho hadn't thought of this before coming here himself.

He had thought that Association President Woo Jinchul was only clearing out magical beasts in North Korea, but it turned out he was dealing with not only them but also villains. Moreover, he hadn't even imagined that villains were building cities and living like this. Quite a few people in South Korea were already dissatisfied with Association President Woo Jinchul's long absence.

Who would like it? He created the Association, but he himself was away, wandering somewhere else. And the biggest problem was that 'Choi Jong-In,' an S-rank Hunter, was among the Association Hunters he took to North Korea. If only the 'ultimate hunter' had stayed in South Korea. No, if he had just handed over the position of Association President to Choi Jong-In and left, no one would be dissatisfied with Woo Jinchul's actions like this. The presence of a single S-rank Hunter, a walking weapon of war, was that significant. In fact, the various cumbersome procedures Suho had to go through to get permission to enter North Korea were also a butterfly effect caused by Choi Jong-In's absence.

'But from our country's perspective, the existence of a city like this is much more threatening than magical beasts acting on instinct.' The presence of a city of villains right above their heads was a much more threatening situation than when North Korea was still stable before the Cataclysm. So it would have been only natural for the Association President to wipe out the villains' cities whenever he saw them. And no matter how many criminals gathered, it wouldn't be a threat to him. He had 'Choi Jong-In' by his side. Just as Suho burned down Elvenwoods, Choi Jong-In was an S-rank

Hunter who also mainly used fire magic, so he would be able to turn Elvenwood into a sea of flames. Thinking of Woo Jinchul, Suho suddenly became curious.

"But why is this city still safe?"

[That's... because it hasn't been discovered by Woo Jinchul yet. That's the Enforcers' main job first and foremost. To rebuild the city in a place where Woo Jinchul can't see it. Besides, the walls of this one are more robust than ever.]

Suho nodded. Well, even the great Association President Woo Jinchul wouldn't be able to control everything happening in North Korea. Moreover, the blue mist was so thick in this land that even satellite cameras couldn't penetrate it. If they retraced Woo Jinchul's path and built a new city, it wouldn't be difficult to avoid him. And as long as the Enforcers were safe, a city like this could be rebuilt anytime, anywhere.

"Seriously. It's like a cockroach nest..."

[The Queen of Insects, the Plague Monarch, perks up her ears.]

"Go back in. I wasn't calling you." Suho dismissed Querehsha's presence and thought about what he had to do now based on the information he received from the guard captain.

3

[My liege, how about this? While you're burning everything down as usual, I'll take the soldiers and secretly search for those who escape.] Beru added with bloodthirsty eyes,

"No. We don't know who the Enforcers are. We have to consider the possibility that they're not in the city at all times." First of all, if no one knew who they were, there was no point in killing all the villains here and turning them into shadow soldiers.

"So we have to make them come out by themselves... Wait, what was the role of the Enforcers? To maintain order in the city?"

[Yes, that's correct.]

"Then the answer is clear." Suho smirked at the guard captain's words and said,

"We just need to make them want to maintain order in this city."

Smirk... A city that was surprisingly well-organized for a lawless zone. Suho had plenty of ways to disrupt the system here.

"Hmm. Then first..." Excluding the Enforcers, there were three main factions that ruled this city openly.

The bank.

The Hunter Guild.

And the Free Market Alliance.

Among these three, the most vulnerable one was obviously the loose association of merchants and debtors. The market

"Shall we shake up the 'market' first?" Having decided on a rough plan, Suho grinned and looked back at Sirka, asking,

"Sirka, are you tired? Let's go to sleep."

"Where will we sleep?" Sirka tilted her head at his words. But even before receiving an order, the guard captain quickly moved, took out the money bag he had stashed in his dead body's pocket, and respectfully offered it to Suho.

[It's not much, but this should be enough to get you lodging for a while.]

"Oh, what a kind person."

Clank

Suho chuckled and gladly accepted the money bag. But...

"Thank you, but I don't need lodging."

Flash—!

Suho took out the 'Shadow Dungeon Key.'

"When it comes to sleeping, it's best to rest in a comfortable place. And I haven't done today's daily quest yet."

[Entering Shadow Dungeon.]

Just like that, Suho and Sirka disappeared into the Shadow Gate.

\* \* \*

A while later.

"...What?" The bank employee, who was leisurely waiting for word of Suho, hardened his expression as he belatedly heard the news about the guard captain.

"The guard captain was found dead?"

"Yes. All the Enhanced Humans he took with him were also dead. And the whole area..."

"Was frozen?"

"Yes. There were traces of high-level ice magic. With this much power, it's at least A-rank."

"A-rank? I thought he was a summoner..." The bank employee, who received the report from the debtor wearing a choker, let out a hollow laugh. But his eyes were filled with killing intent more than ever. It was the complete opposite of the welcoming atmosphere he exuded when he first met Suho.

"Then what was that elf? Was it not a summon, but something he captured and tamed? Or another skill altogether?" Suspicions piled up, and various scenarios came to his mind.

'...If it's just an A-rank villain appearing in the city, it's not a problem. They'll eventually need money to survive here anyway.' It wasn't necessary for all citizens to be debtors. Making newcomers like the one today fall into debt was just a custom. It was more about testing their abilities. To see how and where to use them, and to find out any hidden skills. And the fact that the guard captain, who even took the Enhanced Humans with him, was annihilated wasn't a big deal either. There were plenty of replacements in the Hunter Guild. But the problem was...

'Somehow, I have a bad feeling about this.' Yes, this newcomer felt strange from the first time he saw him.

The calmness subtly revealed in his expression and attitude. Something that couldn't be explained by mere bravado. It was an expression rarely seen in the apocalyptic North Korea. The bank employee's gaze suddenly turned to the desk. There was the citizen registration form he left behind.

'Name: Beru'

7

"...Tsk. Even when using a fake name, it has to be something sensible. It's not like he's making a game ID."

'Kids these days.' It was pathetic no matter how many times he looked at it. Everyone used fake names in this city, but his naming sense was still terrible from the perspective of someone who had to be called by that name. However what if even that name was meant to lower their guard? Why...?

"...Is there a possibility that he's Woo Jinchul's pawn?" The debtor shook his head at the bank employee's words, who voiced the worst-case scenario among the possibilities he was considering.

"No way. If that were the case, he would have settled things quietly instead of escalating them like this."

"That's true. Anyway, he's a suspicious guy, so we'll have to keep an eye on him for a while. So where is that Beru guy staying today?"

"That's hmm... He isn't..."

"What? What do you mean, he isn't staying anywhere?" The debtor stammered at the bank employee's cold gaze,

"I-it's true. Whether he disappeared into the sky or into the ground, his traces have completely vanished from the alley where the bodies were found."

"...Find him! You said he even took the guard captain's money bag, so there's no way he's sleeping on the streets!"

"It's true. I'm currently having my subordinates search the entire area, but we can't find him..."

"You incompetent fools! Find him even if you have to stay up all night!" At the bank employee's roar. The debtor left the bank as if he was being chased away.

2

"Y-yes!"

And following his orders, he searched the city all night looking for Suho, who had disappeared. But all that effort was in vain... In the morning, Suho was leisurely strolling through the middle of the market.

"F-found him! He's at the market right now...!"

"You couldn't find him for the whole night! Don't even dream of having your debt forgiven!"

"...!"

The debtor despaired at those words. Debt was this scary. But fortunately, this wasn't the only thing he had to report.

"But that Beru guy... He started selling something at the market this morning."

"What? He suddenly started doing business?" The bank employee had a strange expression when he heard those words. The first thing newcomers did when they arrived in the city was to sell the things they brought from South Korea to earn money. But why...? He had a bad feeling about this again.

"Where is he? I'll have to see it myself."

"I'll guide you right away!" The debtor, delighted that his debt might be reduced, led the way with a bright expression.

\* \* \*

A little later, The bank employee, guided by the debtor and arriving at the place where 'Beru' was doing business, froze on the spot.

"...Wh-what are those?"

This was absurd.

Unbelievable.

The market was vast. The citizens of this city did business fiercely to pay off their debts to the bank. Or to avoid debt. But where did all those goods come from? At most, they were personal belongings brought from South Korea. Those would be sold out in half a day. After that, they would have to leave the city and risk their lives to find something worth money, just like everyone else. But...

"Where did all those things come from?!" The bank employee couldn't help but exclaim in shock.

– Wow... What is all this?!

– It's been so long since I've seen food like this!

– They even have cream cake!

...'Beru', was selling Korean food in the middle of the market. An enormous amount of food, as if he had brought an entire supermarket from South Korea!

1

*CREATORS' THOUGHTS*



Craftyprogamer

# **Solo Leveling: Ragnarok [FAN TL] Chapter 279 - Chapter 277**

## **Chapter 279: Chapter 277**

Have you ever tasted magical beast meat?

It's terribly unappetizing. And not only that, it's also toxic. If you recklessly eat it, you'll get indigestion, and your stomach itself might melt, or all your organs might rot. But there's always an exception.

There are definitely edible magical beasts.

So the survivors used various methods to neutralize the toxins of less poisonous magical beasts and eat them. Of course, even then, it didn't taste good. But in any case, this was the apocalyptic North Korea.

After the Cataclysm, this land became a paradise for magical beasts. Cities were in ruins, and people were struggling to survive. In this wretched place, complaining about food was a luxury. When you were about to starve to death, what did taste matter? If a person starves for a few days, taste becomes irrelevant. For survival, you had to shove anything into your mouth and chew and swallow it, whether it was magical beast meat or food waste. And that was the reason why a 'market' existed in this city.

"Selling! Magical beast meat with low toxicity! Special price!"

"Over here! Detoxified magical beast! Prepared as minced meat!"

"Freshly picked fruits, this morning's harvest! Come and get them!"

"Barter possible! Negotiation welcome!"

The free market was bustling as always. Anyone could freely buy and sell goods here, even without joining the alliance. The atmosphere was similar to a flea market.

Hunter 'Kim Chul' (pseudonym), who was slicing and selling freshly hunted meat on the street, clicked his tongue with a worried face. "Tsk, business isn't going well."

Another merchant, Kang Giho (pseudonym), replied, "I agree. But what can you do? We have to sell it somehow."

Hunters usually carried out requests from the bank to procure food ingredients and received rewards, and then sold the leftover meat. Kang Giho, squatting on the ground and diligently mincing meat, said,

"That's why I'm telling you to mince it like this and sell it. It's a bit more work, but it's effective." Kim Chul sighed and replied,

"It will not last for more than a day or two. If it doesn't sell in the end, it's all wasted effort."

"Then it all goes into your mouth."

"No way. This one's actually quite toxic."

"What? Seriously. You're a real scammer. Heh... Of course, my meat is too."

Grin. The two merchants exchanged sly glances. In the free market, where trickery and deception were rampant, naive villains couldn't survive. And despite all that, the most popular food ingredient in the market wasn't meat, but something else. Fruit. Or spices that helped mask the unique smell of magical beast meat. The merchants who specialized in selling fruits or vegetables with strong aromas, commonly called 'fruit merchants,' were the real executives and power brokers of the Free Market Alliance.

"Business is good today like always. As expected of fruits." Fruit merchant, Mr. Park (pseudonym), stood in front of his store and smiled with satisfaction.

Mr. Choi (pseudonym), from the store next door, nodded with an envious expression. "I agree. You're truly amazing, Mr. Park. Where do you get all those fruits every time..."

Mr. Park grinned and looked at Mr. Choi with an arrogant expression. "What's the point of asking about trade secrets? And even if I told you, you couldn't do it because it's too dangerous."

"Of course." Despite Mr. Park's blunt words, Mr. Choi just smacked his lips without any discomfort.

First of all, only strong people could sell fruits. Hunting magical beasts, which you could easily encounter outside the city, was much easier and less dangerous than blindly searching outside for fruits whose locations were unknown. That's why only able-bodied individuals ever bothered with that profession. There was a reason why fruit merchants became executives of the alliance. If you were weak but earned a lot of money, it would be dangerous at night. You could be attacked by other villains while sleeping and have everything, including your life, taken away.

But then...

"Hmm?" Mr. Park suddenly narrowed his eyes and looked somewhere.

"...An unfamiliar face."



A newcomer he had never seen before appeared in the usually leisurely and bustling morning market. Quite a few merchants bothered to remember the faces of the customers who passed by. Mr. Park was one of them, and Mr. Choi also followed his gaze, stroking his chin meaningfully.

"Hmm. I heard a newbie came in last night. I think his name was 'Beru'."

"Ah, is that him? I was a bit excited because it's been a while since we had a newcomer, but he's empty-handed."

"I agree."

Even though the city was large, rumors spread quickly. The news about the newbie who entered the city last night had already spread to the Free Market Alliance through the guards. Even the fake name he used at the bank. It was one of the advantages of the alliance.

"...But the rumors are true. Look. He's not completely empty-handed. He's blatantly dragging around a really expensive product."

"You're right." Mr. Park's eyes also sparkled and he smirked at Mr. Choi's meaningful words.

"That's a real elf, right? And a fresh, live one at that." Mr. Park licked his lips as he confirmed the pointy-eared alien obediently walking beside 'Beru'.

"At first, I heard he said he was a summoner, but judging from last night's incident, it must be a lie. Of course, that elf wouldn't be a summon either."

"He's really lucky. Where did he find such a fresh elf? Since it's not even an adult, it would have been whoever's picked it up first." The jealousy and greed that were on Mr. Choi's face just moments ago had now moved to Mr. Park.

No matter how expensive fruits were, they couldn't compare to an 'elf.' Elves were the fertilizer that Alfheim loved the most. No matter how many fruits you had, it was more profitable to catch an elf and sell it to the bank. But was there anyone in this market who didn't know that? Mr. Park's gaze subtly swept around. The eyes of all the merchants in the market were focused on 'Beru' and Sirka. With the same look as his.

"...Is this the market? It feels quite lively." Suho and Sirka were leisurely looking around.

On the surface, it was the same bustling market as before, but an unspoken tension was already flowing among the merchants. The reason was none other than this:

'Those who don't know the market price are suckers.'

Newbies who just arrived in the city didn't know the market price. Customers who didn't know the value of goods were nothing more than delicious prey to merchants. Especially when that newbie was still fresh, with little debt. If they played their cards right, they could clean him out, a sucker among suckers. And an elf on top of that?

'It's a first-come, first-served battle.'

'Before anyone else scams that sucker, I have to...'

'If I can just buy that elf at a bargain price, it's a jackpot.'

As countless greedy gazes watched Suho and Sirka's every move,

Whoosh—

A roughly made wooden sign suddenly appeared from Suho's arms. And he chose a suitably spacious and quiet spot and stuck the sign in the ground like other stall owners.

[Beru Baguette]

3

A puzzled expression appeared on the faces of the market people as they saw the roughly scribbled text.

"Baguette? A bakery?" Mr. Park muttered with narrowed eyes.

Mr. Choi also tilted his head. "Is he really going to sell bread? Then what about the elf?"

Something was strange. He had put up a sign that said 'Baguette,' but he wasn't holding any bread, or anything else for that matter. One of the merchants whispered,

"What is he thinking? He looks empty-handed no matter how I look at it."

"I agree. Is he using the elf as bait and planning to sell something else first?"

A strange light flickered in people's eyes. He was quite the businessman for a sucker. Newbies who just arrived in the city hadn't been away from South Korea for long, so they were likely to have belongings that were hard to find in the North. It wouldn't be too late to sell the elf even after getting rid of those first.

"Ah, is it a small item?"

"Could it be cigarettes?"

"Ah, it's cigarettes!"

They were certain. In cases like this, it was almost always cigarettes or lighters that came out of newcomers' pockets. And it goes without saying that cigarettes were a rare commodity in apocalyptic North Korea. It meant they were incredibly expensive. Of course, this was only true if the seller knew the market price.

'So what is it?'

'What's he going to sell?'

Based on their experience, the market people focused their attention on what 'Beru Baguette' would sell. The trick here was to glance at it inconspicuously. If he knew he was being watched, he would raise the price recklessly.

"Hmm. Is this space enough?" Suho muttered as he looked around.

The people's interest peaked at those words.

'So what is it!' But then...

Whoosh—

"...Huh?"

The market community's expressions suddenly froze.

'Container' The moment Suho inserted the black key into his shadow, a large container suddenly appeared majestically.

"Wh-what is that?" One of the merchants rubbed his eyes and muttered.

"A container?"

"What kind of skill is that?"

Others also began to murmur in surprise. It was a world where they naturally thought of skills when a strange phenomenon occurred. But they had never heard of a skill that could summon a container like that. That aside, he obviously wasn't selling the container... People's minds went blank at the unrealistic sight that suddenly unfolded before their eyes, filled with anticipation. It was hard to maintain their composure any longer.

[My liege, the reactions are already heated.] Beru chuckled beside Suho, watching the people murmuring around them.

"I agree. And we haven't even opened the lid yet." Suho replied with a grin.

The first step to disrupting the order of this city... To do this, Suho had to move a little busily last night First, he finished a round of iron body training for his daily quest in the shadow dungeon. And instead of returning to this city immediately, he briefly stopped by South Korea. Using the Shadow Key and the Shadow Exchange skill he stopped by the nearest 'bakery.'

– I'll take everything from here to there.

– ...Excuse me?

– No need for packaging. They'll take care of moving everything.

– ...?!

Thud! Thud! Thud—!

The bakery employee, who was about to close the store, couldn't help but be flustered at the sight of the suddenly appearing porters.

It was truly a flex. Suho was quite wealthy. He had been diligently raiding dungeons for level-ups and other reasons. And the payments for the Spring Water of the Echo Forest, which the Scavenger Guild sold on his behalf, were also steadily deposited into the Woojin Guild's account. With this level of capital, he could easily buy an entire bakery. Actually, even a B-rank Hunter could do it. But no one would do something like that if there was no need. But Suho now had a reason to do so.

Clank—

The moment Suho opened the container door with both hands...

"...?!"

"What the f..." A fruit that Mr. Park was holding in his hand dropped to the ground.

But nobody seemed to notice.

His face full of shock

His mouth hanging open.

Because everyone else gathered in the market was in the same state. Their eyes wide open as if they were about to pop out.

"Wh-what is all that?!" Screams of shock shook the entire market.

It was absurd. The neatly arranged shelves. The dazzling array of baked goods filling them. And the crazy, stimulating smell of bread that exploded as the container opened! The sight was truly a mixture of shock, fear, and overwhelming emotion all piled up inside the one container! And at the center of it all, Beru said with the most wicked smile,

[Do you want bread? I'll give it to you if you want. I brought all the remaining stock from the bakery.] As soon as he finished speaking...

Waaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaa—!

The market entered the era of the 'big bakery'. And people rushed towards Beru Baguette, filled with madness. Holding out their money bags. But...

Suho ruthlessly poured cold water on those customers, no, suckers, who came rushing with such terrifying momentum.

2

"Now, let's start the auction."

"...What?!"

It was the moment when the balance of the Free Market Alliance, firmly maintained by the magical beast meat and fruit merchants, crumbled.

*CREATORS' THOUGHTS*



Craftyprogamer

## **Solo Leveling: Ragnarok [FAN TL] Chapter 280 - Chapter 278**

### **Chapter 280: Chapter 278**

Suho's bakery turned the market into complete chaos. The villains scrambled to participate in his auction, throwing their money around without hesitation.

"I-I have to buy this no matter what!"

"How long has it been since I smelled bread?!"

'Bread!'

A bakery in the middle of the apocalypse! It was a major event that made all the villains drool and their eyes roll back. Honestly, who would eat magical beast meat if they had a choice? They taste bad? No... it's just terrible! It's so disgusting that it makes you want to throw up, let alone evaluate its taste. Frankly, even if one peeled the shell of a capsule-type pill and poured it into one's mouth, he could lick it up more deliciously than magical beast meat. There was a reason why fruits were the best-selling food in the market. It was the same principle as taking bitter herbal medicine and quickly popping a candy into your mouth.

"50 coins!"

"60 coins!"

"80 coins!"

Bidding prices began to soar at a terrifying rate.

"100 coins!"

"110 coins!"

"150 coins—!"

The market heated up endlessly as they competed with each other. Even as this was happening, the extremely violent and stimulating smell of bread dominated the market. The villains' hungry desires were helpless before that overwhelming scent. But it wasn't just hunger that drove them. Come what may, the people gathered here were all seasoned merchants. They were those who had been doing business with countless villains in the marketplace, so they were quick with their calculations.

'Let's buy it first!'

'I have to buy this no matter what!'

'I can just resell it at a higher price!'

It was a very simple calculation. No matter how much bread was in that container, it was ultimately a consumable, a limited resource that would eventually be exhausted. They instinctively recognized the value of that scarcity. The people gathered here weren't all the citizens living in the city. Rather, there were far more people from the market. So whoever bought more, regardless of the price, was the winner. They could eat it themselves, but they could also sell it at a much higher price to those who weren't here. And at that time,

'The price would be whatever I ask for!' Now, the stage was set. All Suho had to do now was smile and watch as they shouted their bids.

'They said those who don't know the market price are suckers...' Suho knew how they were looking at him from the beginning. It was thanks to asking the guard captain, who became a shadow soldier last night, about the city. Thanks to that, Suho already knew the exact market price before even entering the bazaar.

'Now who's the sucker?' But what did it matter if he didn't know the market price?

'I can just decide the price myself.' Birds of a feather flock together. Suho and Beru's smiles were becoming more and more alike. No, maybe it had been that way for a while. Beru was the one who raised Suho, after all.

3

[My liege, the plan is a great success. We've already sold half of it.] Beru whispered with a devilish smile beside him.

But Suho's lips curled up even more coldly as he replied, "Already? There's still half left."

Since there was so much bread in the container, the rate at which the auction price was rising was slowly decreasing. As this place was full of merchants, a reasonable rate was gradually being established. But Suho had saved the biggest and tastiest bread for this.

"Now, I'll raise the starting price of the auction to 1,000 coins."

"...What?!"

Mixed reactions arose among the villains. Those who succeeded in buying bread earlier by diligently raising the price were relieved, and those who were just watching to save money trembled in shock.

"Th-this is price manipulation!"

"Yes! This is too much!"

"1,000 coins for a piece of bread?!"

Those who hadn't bought any bread yet protested fiercely with angry expressions. Magic instinctively surged from their clenched fists. But they had to endure. Using force in this free market was a violation of the rules. Outside, it might be different, but from the moment someone started doing business here, it was the alliance's rule to strictly abide by the regulations of the market. The moment someone broke that order, the strongest person here would be able to kill all the merchants and monopolize all the goods. In the

end, if that happened, this city would perish in the long run. And how would the last person left survive alone in this apocalypse? In the end, the 'Free Market Alliance' existed in this city to prevent that.

"Kuhk! This young brat, where did he learn such wicked things?!"

"How dare you play games with food?!" Despite the people's protests, Suho just shrugged with a shameless expression.

"If you don't want to buy, you can just leave." His polite tone was extremely annoying. And not only that, Suho began to blatantly abuse his position. He glanced at the merchants who were most fiercely expressing their anger and immediately changed his words.

"Hmm. I've changed my mind because of those men. Let's start at 1,100 coins."

"...?!"

"No. 1,200 coins since there are two of you."

2

'Ah, no!' This was too much! But the villains gritted their teeth at Suho's blatant abuse of power. What could they do? If they didn't like it, they could just leave. They had to suppress the magic power surging within them. And all the people in the market glared at the two individuals Suho pointed at. Those two turned pale from those murderous gazes and hurriedly hid among the crowd. It seemed like they would have to hide for a while. Although using force was prohibited inside the market, it was very possible outside.

'J-just you wait!'

'No matter how much money you earn here, when we meet outside...!'

Everyone in the market inwardly gritted their teeth at Suho's tyranny. But what could they do? The auction resumed helplessly.

"...1,200 coins!"

"1,300 coins!"

The price of bread skyrocketed, but they were still willing to pay, thinking they could just resell it at a higher price. It was then...

Clank—



The noisy market suddenly fell silent at the sharp metallic sound.

'What's that?' While Suho was puzzled by the sudden change in atmosphere, The gazes of everyone in the market were focused on one place. And at the end of those stares...

[Kieek?] Beru's eyes narrowed.

A young woman was standing at the entrance to the market. She looked to be around 17 or 18 years old. A girl who looked like a high school student was carrying a giant scythe that didn't match her physique on her shoulder. That sound just now must have been the sound of the end of that large scythe touching the ground.

"...It's the Reaper, Hasul!"

"Why is that crazy bitch here..."

The atmosphere in the market froze in an instant. The faces of the people, which were filled with excitement just moments ago, were now filled with fear. On the other hand, Suho's eyes sparkled.

'Harvester Hasul' She was one of the noteworthy figures mentioned in the information he heard from the guard captain last night.

[Those who specialize in harvesting the fruits of Alfheim are called 'Reapers'. Especially among them, the most famous one was...]

That girl, Hasul. Her fame had spread throughout the city, to the point where even Suho, who just arrived, could easily hear about it. There were countless villains whose heads were blown off by that giant scythe for hitting on her because she was young and pretty. Considering that this city was full of villains, it was pointless to count the number of people who lost their lives to Hasul's scythe. But apart from her cruel methods, Suho could immediately tell why she was able to become the most famous Reaper.

'S-rank.'

Suho immediately recognized Hasul's level. He understood why people were so nervous just by her appearance.

Clank.

Clonk.

Hasul, as if accustomed to this silent atmosphere, slowly walked towards them. People hurriedly made way for her wherever she passed. Eventually, Hasul stood before Suho.

The moment their eyes met in the air, Sirka, who was beside him, muttered with sharp eyes in a language only Suho could understand,

"Could this human be an Enforcer?"

If she was S-rank, she was certainly capable enough. No one knew the identity of the Enforcers, but conversely, it meant they could be hiding their identity and living among the people. But...

"That."

"...Hmm?" Suho looked in the direction Hasul's finger was pointing with a puzzled expression.

"Strawberry cake."

"..."

"How much?"

"..."

Hmm. He didn't know about the Enforcer part, but she was certainly a woman of few words. In the tense atmosphere, the Reaper Hasul was silently pointing at the strawberry cream cake displayed on the shelf. With the giant scythe that had blown off the heads of countless villains still slung over her shoulder. One strange thing was that he couldn't feel any emotion in her eyes as she looked at the strawberry cake. She looked like an unfeeling doll. Suho stared intently at Hasul and finally spoke with a firm resolve,

1

"Hey. You started it."

"...?!"

'He's crazy!'

Suho's shocking remark greatly agitated people.

'Is he really crazy?'

'Has he lost his mind?'

'Even if he's a newcomer to the city, does he have no sense of self preservation?'

'If we're this nervous, he should at least read the room!'

'How dare he say that to Hasul...!'

Of course, even the notorious Hasul wouldn't harm anyone in the marketplace. But what if they met outside the market? All Reapers, not just Hasul, were fundamentally fast. It was impossible to climb the tall Alfheim tree, evade the attacks of the spirits, and harvest the fruits without considerable speed. This meant that if he encountered Hasul outside the city, it would be difficult to escape. But that clueless newbie... With a grin on his face, continued to speak boldly, not caring about her at all.

"If you want to buy the cake, participate in the auction like everyone else here."

"...And if I don't want to?"

"Then barter."

"...?"

Hasul's, who had been expressionless, furrowed her brow for the first time, as if Suho's answer was unexpected. He felt a sense of satisfaction at that minute change in expression. On the other hand, the faces of the market people watching Suho and Hasul's suffocating conversation were changing by the moment.

'What? Bartering is also allowed?'

'It must be a rule he just made.'

'He's a terrible businessman.'

But in any case, this was a free market. It was their freedom to auction off precious items or barter. The problem was simply that the 'bread' Suho was currently selling was an overwhelmingly rare item that was disrupting the market. In the end, the business he was doing didn't violate the logic of the free market at all. Hasul also knew this fact. Eventually, she glanced at the strawberry cake and then looked Suho straight in the eye and asked,

"What do you want?"

"Fruits."

"...?!"

The market was once again in an uproar at Suho's bold request. They didn't know how many times they had been surprised today. No matter how rare pastries were here, to

exchange one for the expensive fruit of Alfheim! A madman who dared to try and scam the notorious Reaper Hasul appeared. And he must be completely insane...

1

"One cake for one fruit. Ah, two fruits for cakes with strawberries."

...Yes. Perhaps this madman thought that he had two lives. Or maybe that he could be resurrected even after dying.

3

*CREATORS' THOUGHTS*



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