

Solo Leveling: Ragnarok [FAN TL] Chapter 311 - Chapter 309

Chapter 311: Chapter 309

The Apostle of Evolution suddenly recalled the moment he arrived on this barren planet, Earth. The memory of that day when a fragment of his soul, torn from his main body, was sent to this insignificant outer planet on a falling meteorite.

That day, there,

The Apostle of Evolution's top priority was to completely conceal his presence.

[I have to hurry. Before 'he' finds me...]

He was desperate. He had succeeded in arriving on this land, barely evading the Shadow Army's senses, but he couldn't predict when that fearsome king of darkness would discover him. So, the Apostle of Evolution decided to first hide his presence by possessing the bodies of the natives of this planet. But then an unexpected problem occurred.

[A suitable vessel to withstand me...]

– Kyaaa!

– Keuk...!

[...]

They kept dying. The moment his magic power touched their souls, they died instantly without him even doing anything. The vessel was broken. The natives of this planet were incredibly weak. A suitable vessel. The process of finding one was much more difficult than he expected. He was truly bewildered.

[This is absurd. Why are the creatures here so weak?]

Moreover, he was just a small fragment, split to avoid the eyes of the Shadow Army. But even this was too much for the vessels to handle? Considering the overwhelming power of the Shadow Army he encountered in the distant universe, the creatures living on this planet, behind the battlefield, were so pathetic that even calling them insignificant was a compliment.

[Did they degenerate from the peaceful comfort?]

It was too strange no matter how he thought about it. Even if all the combatants were out in space and only non-combatants remained here, Weren't they still too weak? But he decided to postpone satisfying that curiosity. Since he didn't know when he would be discovered hiding on this planet, finding a vessel to conceal his presence as soon as possible was the priority. And then he noticed the dying elderly.

[Even the lifespans of the creatures on this land are short.]

Beep— Beep— Beep—

The elderly, lying on their sickbeds with withered bodies, their breathing growing faint. The sight of doctors waiting to declare their deaths. A strange curiosity suddenly arose within the Apostle of Evolution, who happened to discover the place called a 'hospital'. Humans lying side by side, dying. Feeble souls waiting for the moment to leave their vessels. That series of scenes was enough to stimulate the Apostle of Evolution's curiosity.

[...I have a good idea.]

If a vessel with an owner couldn't accept his magic power, what about a vessel without an owner? If he took over a vessel that had its life functions stopped with its owner's death, a vessel that had lost its owner?

Whoosh—

Since he had nothing to lose, he immediately tried. He failed the first few times. It was extremely difficult to get the timing right. But there were plenty of test subjects. Countless elderly people were lying in the hospital, ready to become his vessel. And after a few attempts, The Apostle of Evolution finally succeeded.

Beeeeep—

He captured the moment when the heart of an old man on the verge of death stopped. And the invader from outer space safely settled into the empty vessel left by his departing soul. He began to spread his magic power through the body, which was rapidly cooling down due to the end of its lifespan, quickly but secretly. But the doctors and nurses, insensitive to mana, didn't notice what was happening before their eyes.

...Twitch

Especially the fact that the moment his heartbeat stopped, The tip of the old man's finger with age spots all over it moved slightly. No one saw that.

Beeeeep—

...He has passed away. Just like that, the old man was declared dead without any unusual events. And the body was immediately moved to another location for the funeral.

The funeral was small.

But no one shed tears.

Instead, frequent arguments broke out around the old man's body. They argued about the division of property, but those were things that didn't matter to the Apostle of Evolution. Who cared about what kind of life this old man had lived? The Apostle of Evolution was only interested in the fact that this dead body was still intact even after containing a fragment of him.

[Success! It's a success!]

The otherworldly invader was laughing joyfully inside the cooled corpse. A body that was already dead. But because of that, a body that could no longer die. Of course, very delicate magic power control was required from now on. Resurrection of the dead. Or strictly speaking, this was an interception of a vessel just before that.

[I'll have to remodel the inside so this body can move again.]

And so, three days. The work of recycling the broken vessel slowly progressed over three days. On the outside, nothing seemed to have changed, but an amazing miracle was happening inside the old man's body.

...Twitch

The old man's cold body in the coffin began to twitch. First, the fingertips, Then the toes, Something was starting at the furthest point from the heart. But unfortunately, those who were surrounding the old man for three days, focused only on his assets, couldn't see that wondrous miracle.

Creak

...Until the old man opened the coffin lid himself and sat up.

— ...Kyaaaaaaaaaak!

— F-father?!

The Apostle of Evolution successfully disguised himself. But he couldn't outwardly express the joy of his success. He remained expressionless even as he watched the humans screaming around him. Although he succeeded in moving the body below his neck using magic power, it was still difficult to control all the facial muscles.

Crack—

Creak...

The old man's appearance, frozen with an expressionless face and stiff neck muscles, was truly bizarre and terrifying. The reactions of those who witnessed that sight were all the same. No one was happy or moved by the fact that their family member came back to life. They either fainted or collapsed, trembling in fear.

Shock, fear, and horror.

The Apostle of Evolution, who unintentionally created that situation just by getting up, still remained expressionless. Rather than wasting magic power on facial expressions, solving the internal problems was the priority.

'Brain'

He had been pouring magic power into the 'brain,' which was rapidly losing its function along with the old man's death, for three days. The task of absorbing the myriad of information about this planet stored in the brain required very delicate and meticulous magic power control. And among that knowledge was language ability. Finally...

"...Success."

— ...?!

When he finally succeeded in opening his mouth and communicating, The reactions of those around him reached their peak. It had been three days since the doctors declared the old man dead. For the corpse that hadn't breathed for days to suddenly come back to life from the coffin and even speak! This was truly unbelievable, no, a 'miracle.'

— G-god...

Suddenly, someone's mutter reached the 'ears' of the Apostle of Evolution and was transmitted to his brain. And as he interpreted the exact meaning, an 'expression' finally appeared on the old man's face, which had been blank. There were over 200 muscles on a human face. In the end, creating an expression was a troublesome task that required organically moving all those muscles. But despite that, the Apostle of Evolution wanted to express 'laughter.'

'God'

Because the word that came out of that frightened creature's mouth referred to the one who sent him to this land.

Grin—

"...God."

Although a bit awkward, the Apostle of Evolution smiled broadly and muttered that word. And his awkward expression quickly found its place. His clumsy speech also gradually became fluent.

"I am not God. Just an apostle of God."

— ...!

And as the Apostle of Evolution said that, no, as the old man who rose from the coffin said that, a truly divine radiance descended upon him.

"So please listen carefully. The one who sent me said..." The Apostle of Evolution extended his bony hand towards the humans who were on the verge of fainting before that dazzling halo and continued,

"Worship God. Praise God. Prove your faith. Those who don't follow this rule..."

2

Flash—

"Will not return alive."

It was the birth of the Cult of the Outer Gods.

* * *

A pink brain...

[...This is what I've been through.] The illusion that the brain trapped in the test tube showed Suho passed like a flash in less than a second.

"...Why did you show me this?"

[Of course, it's to induce sympathy.]

"It's good to be honest." Suho chuckled at the words of the Apostle of Evolution's main body. But his eyes, staring at the brain, were sharper than ever.

"You're awfully confident for someone who was caught hiding."

[It's natural for any living being to beg for its life.]

"You're awfully pathetic for an apostle of Itarim."

[Well, what can I do? There's nowhere left to run from here. Besides, I never expected you, Mr. Sung Suho, to find me so quickly.]

"..."

[Why that face? Are you suspicious that I might be plotting something else here? There's nothing more.]

"You're good at reading expressions even without eyes." Suho narrowed his eyes at the brain in the test tube. As if shrugging, the pink jelly wriggled.

[That's not difficult. All the test subjects I created are my sensory organs. But how did you see through my illusion? I put a lot of effort into creating it.]

The pink brain, the Apostle of Evolution, asked with genuine curiosity. This place, where his main body was hidden, was a hideout he created with all his heart. It was a secret place hidden with double and triple layers of dimensional cracks, complex mazes, and even illusions. But Suho saw through all that and found his main body right away.

"You're full of questions." Suho dismissed his query and answered as if it was obvious,

"If you're researching immortality, it means you don't want to die, right? But you acted as if you didn't care what happened even with me in front of you, so I just broke it."

[...]

Suho grinned, revealing his fist with black energy blazing to the brain, which had suddenly become quiet.

CREATORS' THOUGHTS



Craftyprogamer

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'This is the origin of the Outer Gods Cult?' Having finally found the main body of the Apostle of Evolution, Suho felt somewhat empty. A pink brain trapped in a fish tank. Because of this insignificant thing, the cult was born, and things like stardust and Starpieces spread throughout the world. Because of this insignificant thing. Suho asked,

"But how did you end up with just a brain?"

[It was inefficient to keep moving that old body. So I evolved.]

"You call that evolution?"

[I think, therefore I am.] A famous quote from the philosopher Descartes.

2

After awakening in the old man's body, The Apostle of Evolution read many books to learn about this world. Meanwhile, those who were forcibly indoctrinated formed a religious group called the 'Outer Gods Cult' around him, And they began to increase their influence in the shadows in various ways. And at the center of that quiet storm, the Apostle of Evolution just sat in a wheelchair and read the books written by humans.

– Books... They convey information in a truly primitive way on this planet.

The Apostle of Evolution could transmit the necessary information to someone in a second if he wanted to. So he was even more interested in this primitive and inefficient 'reading.' Because it was so absurd. To spread information to others with subjective and biased interpretations instead of just transmitting the memories as they are. How inefficient.

Rustle Rustle...

The Apostle of Evolution continued to be engrossed in reading despite his grumbling. The more he read, the more this 'reading' method of knowledge transfer increased his thirst for knowledge. Since the information in each book was different, he couldn't figure out which one was correct. So he kept reading. He read and read. The creatures here engaged in fierce debates through books and papers on a single topic. And they were making very slow progress little by little. It was also a kind of 'evolution,' the Apostle of Evolution concluded. And he finally realized...

[It's the 'brain' that ultimately controls the human body. So I got rid of all the unnecessary parts and left only what I needed, and I regressed.]

Smirk. The pink brain wriggled as if raising its nose.

[This is the result. How efficient is it? I just give orders from within here, and the dolls that move like my limbs according to my instructions are increasing. That is the direction of evolution I chose.] That's right. The Outer Gods Cult. As he said, even at this moment, countless humans were actively working as his limbs under the name of the Outer Gods Cult all over the world.

4

According to their faith.

Following the orders from the headquarters of the Outer Gods Cult.

Driven by their desire to become stronger. Stardust, Stardust necklaces, Starpieces... The magic power amplified by them, and the wealth and honor that followed. The Outer Gods Cult had been increasing its influence with those numerous baits. Although the villains' momentum was suppressed in South Korea thanks to Association President Woo Jinchul, it was different in other countries.

The larger the country, the more difficult it was to control criminals. And villains were even more troublesome. Especially the world of shadows where they operated was governed by the law of the jungle. The ones who desperately needed the stardust spread by the Outer Gods Cult were the villains.

[...That's how the 'Outer Gods Cult' was born.]

The Outer Gods Cult.

Although it was definitely a group that gathered under that name at first, in regions where the apocalypse progressed, like North Korea and China, it sometimes shed its religious color and developed into a city-state entirely composed of villains. Like the city 'Paradise' that Suho destroyed in North Korea.

And at this very moment...

[...]

The Apostle of Evolution, who was talking to Suho, suddenly stopped.

[Ah, finally...!] The pink brain in the test tube trembled, showing a strange sense of satisfaction. Suho's eyes narrowed.

"Finally, what?" Even as Suho raised his fist as if to break the test tube, the Apostle of Evolution answered without concern. His voice even sounded somewhat excited.

[All preparations are finally complete.]

Rumble...!

Before the Apostle of Evolution could even finish his words, he felt a tremendous tremor as if the entire space was collapsing. Suho, sensing the change, immediately took out his dagger and swung it.

Crack—

The test tube split in half, and the transparent liquid inside splattered. At the same time, as Suho extended his other hand, the pink brain inside floated up and flew towards

Suho. The Apostle of Evolution, caught in that invisible hand, wasn't flustered but rather intrigued.

[Ah, this is the Ruler's Authority. You are a truly amazing person. If I had the time, I would have liked to capture and study you myself... It's truly a shame.]

"What do you mean?" He was relaxed, even though his brain could explode if Suho clenched his hand.

[It means that the final test subject I created has just been completed.]

The moment he heard those words, Suho expanded his senses and searched the surroundings. But he couldn't feel anything. Just this space, this dimension itself, collapsing.

[Please leave now. This place will collapse soon. You can kill me or leave me behind. My role is over.]

Rumble—!

With those words, the dungeon surrounding Suho began to collapse like a shattered window. Along with the Apostle of Evolution's lab inside.

[My liege! This way!]

Suho ran in the direction Beru urgently pointed and escaped through the Gate he entered. Still holding the pink brain in his hand.

[Even if you take me, I'll die soon. That test tube you just broke was artificially keeping this brain alive.] Suho felt a strange sensation at the calm reaction of the Apostle of Evolution in his hand.

"You seem relieved? For someone who's been researching immortality...?"

[Because I have no regrets even if I die now.]

"What did you do?"

[Heh. You'll find out someday. Ah, by the way, even if I die like this, you won't be able to turn me into a shadow soldier. My fragment contained in this brain isn't enough to be converted into a shadow soldier.]

Suho knew that. He couldn't turn the apostles of Itarim he met so far into shadow soldiers. This was similar to the reason why Sung Jinwoo couldn't turn the dead Monarchs into soldiers after the war. The apostles of Itarim were on a similar level to the dead Monarchs. But not everyone was like that. The Apostle of Evolution had seen it

countless times. That terrifying sight. Sung Jinwoo, whom he witnessed from afar in outer space, killing Itarim's soldiers and instantly raising them as his Shadow Army. When you witnessed that absurdly great and overwhelming sight with your own eyes, you couldn't help but shudder, especially if you were an enemy. Perhaps it was from then that the Apostle of Evolution wanted to imitate Sung Jinwoo's great power.

'The Shadow Monarch, the king who rules death'

That was truly the pinnacle of evolution in his mind...! So he desperately researched it as soon as he arrived on this planet. The result of imitating him to gain a power as similar as possible was the immortal being like No. 47. A biological weapon without a soul. But even though they looked similar on the outside, it was a great insult to compare his dolls to the Shadow Army. Not only was the inherent power different, but the most terrifying aspect of the shadow power was that it stole the enemy's soul and turned them into an ally.

On the other hand, what about his test subjects? He couldn't even think about turning his enemies into them, he had to create every test subject manually one at a time. And even if he wanted to mass-produce them like in a factory, not only were the materials expensive, but a very delicate crafting process was also required. In short, it was terribly inefficient. A complete failure. But the Apostle of Evolution loved the human saying, 'Failure is the mother of success.' Thanks to experiencing those fiascos over and over again, he finally achieved a single success... The result was a little different from his original goal, but it was still quite satisfying.

[Sirka.]

"...!" Suho's eyes widened at the sudden mention of the name.

"Wait, don't tell me?"

[I was truly surprised when I first found out. To think that there was a successor who inherited the power of a dead Monarch. That a method to evolve an ordinary creature into an apostle-level being like us existed on this planet!]

* * *

At that time. In the place where Sirka was sleeping as an ice pillar. A change was occurring while Woo Jinchul and Greed were busy slaughtering the villains who came from China.

Whoosh—!

"Wh-what?!"

Woo Jinchul, startled by the sudden phenomenon, looked around with wide eyes. Red blood that used to stain the pure white snowfield. And all the blood from the corpses of the countless villains they killed began to gush out and rise towards the sky.

Splash—!

[Be careful! It's the divine power of Outer Gods!] At Greed's urgent warning, everyone looked up at the crimson-red lump that formed in the sky with tense eyes.

It wasn't just blood. Greed, the former High Priest of the Outer Gods Cult, and Iron, the former priest, could feel the tremendous divine power emanating from that grotesquely wriggling lump. And they instinctively understood why it suddenly appeared here.

[S-stop it!]

[Don't let it approach Sirka!]

It was too late. Before they could even finish their words...

Whoosh—

The red lump of blood created in the air flew straight towards the ice pillar where Sirka was sleeping.

[Block it with your bodies—!]

Greed and Iron leaped into the sky without hesitation.

* * *

"Was that to buy time?"

Suho glared at the pink brain and asked, "To steal Sirka while I'm stuck here?"

[No. As I said before, Hunter Sung Suho, you arrived much earlier than I expected. If you had followed my original schedule, I wouldn't have met you here, and I wouldn't have died by your hand. But the experiment was successful, so this much deviation is not a problem.]

Although he was flustered by Suho's unexpected actions, the Apostle of Evolution's attitude didn't change much from when they first met.

The reason he told Suho all his plans wasn't to stall for time. The reason he revealed all his plans to Suho wasn't to stall either.

[Humans are the same, aren't they? Those who, like me, work hard behind the scenes are always eager to share their achievements with others when they finally succeed. In that sense, I just wanted to tell you about all the hardships I've gone through with a pure heart. So now I have no regrets even if I die. Now, quickly kill me and go save Sirka. Though it might be too late.]

"You're lying until the end. Whether you learned well about humans or not." Suho chuckled as he watched the Apostle of Evolution giving his last words.

"No regrets even if you die? That's not it. You're thinking of entering that test subject yourself when you die here, aren't you?"

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The Apostle of Evolution finally burst into laughter at Suho's sharp remark. [...Huh. You never cease to amaze me, human.]

That laughter sounded like the hearty chuckle of a seasoned old man and the hysterical giggle of a naive child at the same time.

[Hahaha! That's correct! And even if you don't kill me, the result is the same! This brain has just lost its vitality. This voice is just the remnants of my last remaining magic power...]

"Yes, I'm busy, so let's meet again there." Suho grinned, glaring at the fading brain. And...

"Shadow Exchange."

[Using Skill: 'Shadow Exchange.']

At that moment, Suho's entire body was enveloped in shadows, and his vision was turned upside down.

Whoosh—

And Suho, who switched places with Iron, saw the red lump of blood flying towards Sirka.

"Hey, nice to see you again."

The Apostle of Evolution, who entered the lump of blood just in time, answered Suho's greeting. But he had already become a completely different being. That being was the culmination of all the research he had done, and the final evolution, having completely absorbed the last remaining nutrients left by the dead Apostle of Paradise through the sacrifice of the villains...

[The Nightmare Apostle is hostile towards you.]

The Apostle of Evolution appeared before Suho with a new name.

"Nightmare Apostle?"

Whoosh—

A terrifying killing intent, chilling to the bone, washed over Suho like a tsunami.

Rumble—!

[I'll block him!]

Greed, confirming that Suho, who went to Russia, had returned, jumped in front of him without hesitation and blocked the red tsunami. That thing, which was just a lump of blood at first, began to emit a tremendously ominous aura as soon as the Apostle of Evolution dwelled within, spreading in all directions. Enough to dye the pure white snowfield, even this cold, completely red.

[A bizarre energy is filling the surroundings! I'll go first since we don't know what that guy is...!]

Black steam blazed from Greed's entire body as he stepped forward to protect Suho. But the red tsunami swallowed him whole like fog. They couldn't tell what was happening within, from the outside.

[The Nightmare Apostle is laughing at you.]

"Are you laughing?" Suho's eyebrows twitched.

"Beru."

[Yes, my liege.]

Suho asked, "What happens if you eat this?" Holding up the 'Apostle of Evolution,' which was still in his hand, Beru's lips stretched into a wide grin.

2

[I'll tell you after I eat it.]

Skill, Devour.

Beru swallowed the 'brain' without hesitation.

Chomp—!

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The moment he swallowed the 'brain' where the Apostle of Evolution resided, Beru's 'Devour' skill began to absorb all the memories within. A tremendous amount of information flooded into him, but it was inefficient to accept all of it. He had to carefully select the most important and valuable things from this vast, disorganized pool of memories. And then...

[KIEEEEEEEEEEEK!]

Suddenly, Beru, who had chomped down on the brain, let out a roar with his mouth wide open. That chilling scream was filled with a deep joy. Because the first thing that came to him from the Apostle of Evolution's memories was the image of his great and proud master!

'Arise.'

The deep bottomless darkness.

The shadow of the distant abyss.

The king who rules over death, the Shadow Monarch.

[KIEEEEEEEEEEEK!]

Indeed. An overwhelming sense of fear and terror towards the Shadow Monarch. That was the emotion at the very bottom of the Apostle of Evolution's heart. Beru, trembling with pride and joy, began to explore his memories. And starting with that, the countless experiences he went through and the thoughts the Apostle of Evolution had begun to flood Beru's mind like puzzle pieces.

'Monarch!'

'What is a Monarch?'

Until relatively recently, the only 'Monarch' the apostles of Itarim knew was the 'Shadow Monarch' they encountered in outer space. Indeed. They didn't know much about this universe. Honestly, they underestimated it. Their original goal was invasion, not war. The reason they came here was to scavenge the masterless mana.

But a variable appeared. The Shadow Monarch who blocked their path. The mighty power he displayed, that tremendous and great ability, overwhelmed even the armies of Itarim possessing the brilliant divine power. And the most terrifying thing was that his power didn't simply kill the enemy, but resurrected their souls and recycled them as loyal soldiers who served him. So...

That's where the misunderstanding arose. Until that moment the name 'Monarch' that the apostles of Itarim knew referred to that fearsome and overwhelming being. At least until they came to Earth. When they finally arrived in the dimension guarded by the Shadow Monarch after going around the vast universe, A truly shocking truth awaited them.

[Oh my god.]

[There was more than one Shadow Monarch?!]

It was a shock, they realized that there was more than one Monarch in this universe.

[A variable...!]

[We need to inform headquarters!]

[Impossible! We've come too far! To convey this information, we would have to go back all that way!]

This was a real disaster. The apostles, who had arrived in this remote region one after another, were confused for a while. They went through all the trouble of going around the universe to avoid the Shadow Monarch and reach the rear, but there were several more beings equal to him here?! The frustration they felt when they first discovered this information was indescribable.

[I can't believe it.]

[There were many Monarchs, like our apostles!]

[There were more beings like the Shadow Monarch?]

[What... What is this universe?]

[Indeed...! This is the only way a god could be killed by its creations!]

[Anyway, if there are more like the Shadow Monarch here, there's nothing we can do.]

[Then what should we do?]

[Let's hide for now. If the Monarchs find us, we'll instantly die. No... even after death, we won't be safe.]

[I agree. Let's lay low and assess the situation.]

[Yes. I'll change my plan to gather as much information as possible while hiding. And then convey all that to headquarters.]

That was when it started. When they began to gather information about this dimension while completely concealing themselves. Although they served different gods, they were all fighting against the common enemy, the Shadow Monarch. So they agreed to share any information they found because they all had countless questions.

[So where are the other Monarchs?]

[Why didn't the other Monarchs participate in the war?]

[The investigation revealed that some Monarchs are dead.]

[Then what about the others? Are they alive?]

[Is it possible that all the other Monarchs are dead?]

This was a truly important question. The moment those equal to the Shadow Monarch all went out to outer space, The balance of the war that had been precariously maintained would instantly collapse. And then they found out...

[Good news. According to the investigation, there is a very high probability that the other monarchs are already dead.]

[Confirmed here as well. I found out that the Shadow Monarch killed all the other Monarchs.]

[Then did he absorb all their power and become that strong?]

[No, I don't think so. If that were possible, we would have already encountered other Monarchs who became part of the Shadow Legion in outer space.]

[Then where did their power go?]

[I found out. It seems like the power of the dead Monarchs remains dormant in the Sea of The Afterlife until a successor of each race appears.]

[You mean it's masterless? Confirmed?]

[...Confirmed.]

It was a huge relief. They were surprised to learn that there were more like the Shadow Monarch, but it turned out they were already dead. As they discovered the dimensions of the dead Monarchs one by one, drifting through the dimensional gap, that information became more and more certain. There were no variables.

[That's a relief. Then all we have to do is avoid the Shadow Monarch?]

[No, I don't think we even need to worry about the Shadow Monarch. He won't have the time to care about what's happening beyond the battlefield.]

[Don't let your guard down. We have to assume that the Shadow Monarch is capable of anything.]

[That's going a bit too far. Even the Shadow Monarch is just a creation of God. He's just a very powerful weapon.]

[So what do you want to do?]

[It means we can be more proactive than before.]

They disagreed. The apostles, who had been cooperating to gather information, began to have conflicting opinions the moment they confirmed the deaths of the other Monarchs.

[Then it would be better to move separately from now on.]

[Agreed. But we should continue to share information in case there are more variables.]

[Alright.]

From that moment on, they began to act on their own, with their own goals and methods, only occasionally contacting each other. But even without saying it out loud, they already knew what the others were aiming for.

'The power of the dead Monarchs.'

If they could claim that masterless power, they too could become as strong as the Shadow Monarch. And then they discovered the 'high elves.' The race with the highest chance of inheriting the power of the 'King of the Snow Folk, the Frost Monarch,' who was now dead.

[Found where the high elves are gathered.]

[Planted divine power in the tree they serve.]

[Taught faith to the high elves.]

[They are now our loyal followers.]

[So now, no matter who inherits the Monarch's power...]

But no one said what would come next. There was no need to discuss who would claim that power until the plan succeeded. Since they each served different gods, they naturally wanted to offer that tremendous power to their own Itarim. So they simply thought that when that time came, there might be conflict among them, and they needed to be prepared. But one of them... One apostle had a slightly different idea.

'The Apostle of Evolution.'

He wanted to claim the power of the dead Monarch for himself, not offer it to God. And he was shocked to realize that... His curiosity, his desire to become stronger, had surpassed his faith in God! He was well aware where this blasphemous thought originated from.

2

[...The creatures of this universe killed their god?]

Was that really possible? When the Apostle of Evolution first heard that shocking information, he was stunned.

[I can't believe that's possible. I never even imagined it.]

Honestly... it hurt his pride a little. The Apostle of Evolution considered himself the wisest of all creations. At the same time, he also thought of himself as the most loyal servant of God. He believed that his overflowing curiosity and intelligence were blessings bestowed upon him by his beloved god. But... that curiosity, the moment it encountered that incredibly blasphemous truth, began to be twisted in a previously unimaginable direction.

[...Then is it possible for me as well?]

'Creations killing God?'

That was blasphemy. Something that should never happen, a taboo that shouldn't even be imagined. So, the Apostle of Evolution did not come up with such a bold idea on his own. He was simply... curious, if he too could become strong enough to kill God. Could he evolve into such a powerful and overwhelming being?

[Yes, perhaps I too can become like the Shadow Monarch...]

It was a pure curiosity that he could have as the Apostle of Evolution. And that curiosity led to research, the countless results of which were this moment.

'Sirka.'

Indeed. Not the high elves. When he learned that the Frost Monarch chose a completely different elf as his successor, The Apostle of Evolution thought it was time for his research to bear fruit. And he immediately put it into action.

* * *

The entire area was dyed in a red fog. Numerous system messages appeared before Suho. And at that moment, Greed, who had been swallowed by the red fog, suddenly popped his head out and urgently warned him.

[Something's wrong! I can't damage this fog no matter what I do! Physical attacks, magic attacks, nothing works...!] Beru responded to that.

[...Little Monarch.]

The conclusion Beru reached after going through the Apostle of Evolution's memories was much more despairing than he expected.

[This entire area is a mixture of the nightmare he created and reality. No matter how much you attack and kill him here, he'll just come back to life. Like...]

"Waking up from a nightmare?"

[Yes. Half success, half failure. His original goal was to evolve into a being like the Master, but although the method is a bit different, he succeeded in at least becoming like a shadow soldier. And to become even stronger...]

Suho could immediately guess what would come next. Just in time, an urgent message arrived from Sillad.

[The King of the Snow Folk, the Frost Monarch, requests help!]

[The Nightmare Apostle is interfering with Sirka's dream.]

At this moment, Suho and Beru finally realized where the Nightmare Apostle was. In the dream of Sirka, who was sleeping inside the ice pillar. He was trying to enter there and steal the power of the Frost Monarch.

"Sillad!" Suho shouted.

And Sillad immediately summoned Suho to his world.

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

Time stopped, and Suho's vision was flipped. His mind began to endlessly fall into the distant abyss. Just like when Esil failed the succession ceremony and fell into the Sea of The Afterlife towards the World Tree. But this wasn't Suho's first time, so he wasn't flustered. Even as he fell, he calmly glared at the abyss where not a single ray of light could be seen. But something unexpected happened...

[Beru uses Skill: 'Nightmare'.]

5

'...What?'

Beru appeared beside the falling Suho.

[KIEEEEEEEEEK!]

Beru was also confused.

[Little Monarch! Where are we?!]

The two fell together into Sirka's nightmare.

CREATORS' THOUGHTS



Craftyprogamer

Solo Leveling: Ragnarok [FAN TL] Chapter 314 - Chapter 312

Chapter 314: Chapter 312

A blizzard raged across the pure white snowfield.

Tap tap tap.

Sirka had been dreaming for some time now. Her seemingly perpetual journey across the icy sea, without shoes, was merely a figment of her imagination. Suddenly, she looked down at her feet on the frozen surface and she saw something...

Crack...!

Every time Sirka's small foot took a step, cracks spread across the surface. The ice was so thin it felt like an eggshell, it seemed like even a slight misstep would cause it to shatter. And below that...

Splash... Splash...

The pitch-black sea of the abyss rippled. It was so deep that she couldn't see the bottom.

Whirl—

Sirka's small body swayed from the harsh blizzard that suddenly swept in from all directions. Thankfully she quickly regained her balance and stepped forward. Carefully, but with firm steps that never faltered.

Her footprints followed behind her like a long tail. Seeing that, Sirka suddenly recalled the past. From when she was very young. No... from the moment she was born until now.

It was familiar. This harsh, cold winter was the playground and grave of the ice elves. A harsh frost, where only the footprints of those who survived remained. And the grave of the countless kin who couldn't leave their footprints and were buried in the cold. Those who survived were the strong...

'I am strong.'

Sirka moved forward with unwavering steps. And after walking for a while, she saw something. Her eyes narrowed. Beyond the seemingly endless white blizzard, a giant shadow flickered in the distance.

'A pillar?'

At first, she thought it was a very tall pillar. But when she looked closer, she realized it wasn't. After walking for a while, Sirka finally understood what it was.

'The World Tree...'

The World Tree. The divine tree where the power of the Rulers resided. A majestic pillar, incomparable to Elvenwood. And... the tree that held the Primordial Darkness. As Sirka finally found her destination and her footsteps turned towards it...

[Sirka...]

Flinch.

Sirka's head turned in surprise at the sudden voice. All she could see was a white blizzard. But the voice continued.

[You are not qualified to be a Monarch.]

...Crack!

'...!'

Suddenly, the ground beneath her caved in and her bare feet were submerged in the black sea below. That was the moment when Sirka's dream turned into a nightmare.

Crack! Crack, crack!

'The ice shattered!'

The nightmare suddenly struck. A harsh cold swept in, even fiercer than before, centered around her.

The blizzard completely obscured her vision. And Sirka's sharp ears twitched in surprise at the sound of cracking coming from under her feet.

Craaaack...!

The ice beneath Sirka began to shatter like a spiderweb. And black water gushed out from the cracks.

Splash!

'...?!'

What jumped out from the pitch-black water was a hideous monster. A magical beast resembling a shark, but much more grotesque and terrifying. It lunged towards her with its maw wide open, filled with fangs. Sirka barely dodged those teeth by twisting her body. But that was only the beginning.

Splash! Splash! Splash!

Countless monsters began to emerge from the black sea. The ice continued to shatter. Sirka desperately moved her feet as the surface she could stand on gradually decreased.

'The World Tree...! I have to get to the World Tree!'

Using the pinnacle of the Elven Footsteps. Sirka leaped from one ice shard to another using them like stepping stones. Each stride was precarious. It felt like she would become prey to the countless monsters chasing her if she made even a single mistake. Truly a nightmare. Sirka's dream had turned into a nightmare where she was desperately running away from monsters. And then she heard a voice from behind.

[Give up. That place is more suited to me.] The Nightmare Apostle. The one who turned Sirka's dream into a nightmare spoke.

[I will take the Monarch's power.]

'Don't be ridiculous! That power is mine!'

As if mocking Sirka's outburst, the monsters' attacks became even fiercer. But she didn't change direction and continued running towards the World Tree, faintly visible in the distance. And as she did, the Nightmare Apostle's attacks became even stronger. That was when.

Crack!

Something unidentified was blocking Sirka's path.

'...!'

At first it was just a lumpy pink mass. But as the shape became clearer, Sirka couldn't help but be surprised.

'That's... me?!'

A face that looks exactly like her. But the skin was pitch black, and the hair was silver like moonlight...

'Dark Elf'

The Apostle of Nightmare, who had transformed into a form that was called that, looked down at the real Sirka's entire body with a cold gaze.

[The power of ice and winter. Your vessel is too insignificant to contain that.]

[What I have is efficient.]

Phew!

At that moment, all the nightmares surrounding Sirka became more intense. A heavy snowstorm blew in, obscuring her vision. The monsters that had been drooling across the thin sheet of ice rushed in with even greater ferocity to devour her. In the meantime...

Swoosh-!

An ice arrow shot by the Apostle of Nightmare flew towards Sirka who barely avoided it, but that wasn't the end. Just like the number of monsters, the number of arrows also increased. But even in all this, she never forgot her purpose.

'The World Tree...! Just a little bit...!'

– It's too hard to fight.

– There is no need to fight.

Sirka continued to run forward, ignoring the numerous nightmarish voices, and as a result, the World Tree was getting closer and closer. But the Apostle of Nightmare's attacks also became more intense.

'Ugh!'

Finally, a black ice shard grazed Sirka's leg, leaving a wound. And a smile appeared on the dark elf's lips.

[I got you.]

Suddenly, hideous tentacles sprouted from Sirka's wound and wrapped around her leg. She instinctively realized their identity.

'Elvenwood! You're trying to turn me into Elvenwood!'

[Indeed. Those scraps are much more suited to you than the World Tree.]

The nightmare smiled with satisfaction. And at his gesture, countless tentacles resembling tree roots soared up from the black sea and attacked Sirka, trying to drag her into the pitch-black water.

'Oh no!'

At that desperate moment, Sirka closed her eyes tightly. And then...

Flash!

Suddenly, from high above, A single ray of darkness fell like lightning.

BOOM!

That darkness cut through all the tentacles and pulled Sirka, who was falling into the black sea, back up.

'...?'

Sirka was startled as someone lifted her in their arms and hurriedly checked their face.

'Are you alright?'

'...S-Suho? How did you get here?'

Sung Suho. He had intervened between Sirka and the Nightmare Apostle... And Beru as well.

[KIEEEEEEEEEEEK! So this is where you ran away to!] Beru roared fiercely from Suho's shoulder.

Although he was small and didn't look threatening, the killing intent in that roar was real. Suho glared at the Nightmare Apostle with Sirka in his arms and raised his lips.

'I told you I'd see you soon.'

[...You actually followed me here? Nothing ever goes according to plan when you're involved.]

6

The Nightmare Apostle, who had taken Sirka's form, let out a hollow laugh, seemingly a bit dumbfounded.

But that was all. He always had a backup plan. Besides, it wasn't like his scheme had completely failed.

[You know? My plan had already succeeded the moment I interfered with this succession ceremony.] The Nightmare Apostle, quickly regaining his composure, bowed elegantly towards Suho.

[I didn't choose nightmares as my path of evolution for nothing.]

He had gathered information from all over the world and calculated every possible scenario. Even if there were some variables, the result wouldn't change. Even the fact that Sung Suho was the Shadow Monarch's son, that he had become the priest of the Monarchs, was all part of his plan.

1

[This is already a nightmare that I rule. Even you can't use your power here.]

The moment he snapped his fingers...

Splash!

'...?!'

Space distorted, and they were all pulled into the black sea. And at that moment Suho's shadow disappeared. The dark ocean was like a world without light. A void where even darkness couldn't exist.

[Can you see?]

The Nightmare Apostle spread his arms wide at the center of that void.

[I can do anything in this nightmare that I rule. And no one can use their power here without my permission. Your shadow is the same.]

At that moment, hideous monsters swam through the sea of the abyss towards Suho.

[They're called Void Sharks. Maggots that clean up the scraps of the dimension by wandering the void.]

Void Sharks. The countless shark-like monsters that attacked Sirka now rushed towards Suho to devour him, their maws wide open with sharp fangs bared. But...

'...Is this all?'

Suho wasn't flustered at all and just stood tall. Tilting his head with Sirka still in his arms.

'S-Suho! It's dangerous!' Sirka was terrified and struggled in Suho's arms. But he just patted her and calmly spoke to the Nightmare Apostle, who was looking down at them with an arrogant expression.

'You seem to be mistaken about one thing.'

Suho took a step into the sea of the abyss. Then, surprisingly, a shadow bloomed from under his feet. The Nightmare Apostle's eyes widened in surprise.

[H-how...!]

'You rule nightmares.' A cold smile appeared on Suho's lips.

'But darkness... doesn't belong to you.'

7

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

2

Suho's shadow exploded from under his feet.

'Darkness belongs to my father.'

3

[...!]

That pitch-black shadow began to devour all the attacks the Nightmare Apostle created.

'And you don't seem to know because this is your first time here, but this is the Sea of The Afterlife, where the World Tree is.'

[Kill him!] The Nightmare Apostle, flustered for the first time, desperately strengthened the nightmare.

Shark-like monsters, Tentacles resembling tree roots, All of them rushed to tear Suho to shreds. But even as he watched that,

'So...' Suho calmly reached out his hand and ordered,

'Arise.'

And then...

It was as if time stopped. The Void Sharks, which had their maws wide open right before Suho, froze in unison. And their forms distorted grotesquely, scattering like black smoke and gathering again. Just like that... New shadow soldiers were born.

[KYAAAAAAAAAAH!]

[...?!]

The Nightmare Apostle couldn't help but be shocked.

[Wh-what...?!]

'Whether you control the nightmares or not, this has long been the world my father ruled.'

[...!]

At Suho's words, the terrible nightmares that had been hindering Sirka turned towards the Nightmare Apostle and lunged at him with their maws open.



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Solo Leveling: Ragnarok [FAN TL] Chapter 315 - Chapter 313

Chapter 315: Chapter 313

[Where did it all go wrong?]

4

When the Nightmare Apostle realized that something had gone wrong with his perfect plan, it was already too late. His gaze quickly swept over the surroundings in that critical moment.

The abyss of falling souls. The endlessly deep Sea of The Afterlife. Within that depth, the scraps of souls that had lost everything and simply existed were floating around with blank expressions. But that was only the tip of the iceberg. If you looked a little deeper into the abyss, you would see countless hideous scraps sinking below. Any living being who caught a glimpse of that sight would instinctively feel an ominous chill. It was that grotesque and terrifying. Indeed. This place, the Sea of The Afterlife, was like a landfill, a dimensional trash can where the scraps of the dead piled up and rotted away. But...

Even that scenery was alluring to the Nightmare Apostle. Because the 'power' that could fulfill his desires existed here. A Monarch wasn't simply the king of a race, but the 'Primordial Darkness' itself. In other words, regardless of the title, the power of Primordial Darkness was what was important. And after a long period of research, He learned that the World Tree played the role of passing on the Primordial Darkness to the new Monarch. So the Nightmare Apostle came up with a plan to drag the scraps here into his nightmare and hinder Sirka's succession ceremony.

To become Sirka's nightmare, invade her dream, and steal the Primordial Darkness. The foundation of the Nightmare Apostle was evolution. To kill Sirka, become Sirka, and turn into the Monarch, that was the end goal of his plan. And that plan was perfect.

...At least until Sung Suho appeared.

Kyaaaaaaaaah!

Chomp! Chomp! Chomp!

[Gack...!] A scream escaped his mouth.

It hurt.

It was agonizing.

The pain was endless.

Void Sharks, no, Shadow Sharks. The black monsters that had escaped his control and swarmed him... They were tearing the Nightmare Apostle's body apart with black steam blazing from their entire bodies. It was a truly gruesome sight, and at the same time, a familiar situation to him.

The battlefield of outer space.

The Shadow Monarch they witnessed from afar.

That terrifying king of darkness did the same thing to them.

'Kill and steal.'

His power, the worst and strongest in the war... Was now being displayed by his son. It was despairing.

Chomp! Chomp! Crack!

[How... in my domain... Gack!]

4

Was this a dream?

No. It's too painful for that. But that's why it was even more unbelievable. It literally felt like a nightmare. No matter how much his limbs were bitten and chewed by the shadow sharks' vicious fangs, his body regenerated over and over. That was the power he obtained by becoming the Nightmare Apostle. The ability to turn everything that happened to him into nothing, like a dream that disappears when you wake up.

But he couldn't avoid the physical pain. And it was endlessly repeating. It was as if his great power was pushing him into the abyss of nightmares. Endlessly... But what was more confusing to the Nightmare Apostle than the pain were his thoughts. Because of what Sung Suho said.

[Is this really... the world ruled by the Shadow Monarch...? That can't be...]

He couldn't believe it. According to his research, the Sea of The Afterlife was a dimension that couldn't be ruled by anyone. There was no value in it, and no race lived

there to rule. It was simply a trash can where scraps that had lost everything floated around.

[There can't be a master ruling over a landfill...]

The Nightmare Apostle groaned with a dumbfounded expression. Even as he screamed blood splattered from his mouth, but it quickly healed. And then he vomited blood again. Suho shrugged at that.

'My family has always been good at recycling.'

3

[...]

Hearing that, he finally realized something. This place didn't belong to anyone, but he finally understood where all those soldiers the Shadow Monarch commanded came from. All the souls drifting in the Sea of The Afterlife were materials for shadow soldiers. If his level was high enough, he could simply pick them up and resurrect them; this place was like a flea market.

[My mistake...] The Nightmare Apostle sighed.

[To think this was 'his' harvest...]

Something so obvious once you knew. Why did he realize this important fact only now?

[I was ignorant.]

He honestly admitted his fault. Admitting ignorance was the foundation of development, and that was evolution.

[But.]

But even as his body was repeatedly destroyed by the sharks' teeth and regenerated, the Nightmare Apostle's eyes didn't show any sign of giving up.

[I won't die here.]

At that moment, the Nightmare Apostle ripped his shark-bitten body apart himself and desperately leaped forward. The World Tree was at the end of that path. The shadow sharks fiercely chased after him and tore at his body, but he didn't stop.

[Evolution is my mission and reason for existence.]

Pain or whatever...

[I can see the goal, I can't give up now.]

Evolution always came with pain.

'Sirka.' Suho gently put down Sirka, who was in his arms, and looked into her eyes.

'Now it's your turn. Walk... You don't need to step on the ice anymore.'

'What...?'

'The Elven Footsteps. If I can do it, you can too.' She followed Suho's gaze and looked down at his feet on the black sea. And her eyes changed. It was none other than Sirka herself who taught Suho the Elven Footsteps skill.

'...!'

There were no unexpected events. Sirka could walk on the Sea of The Afterlife even without the ice path the Frost Monarch created. Suho lightly patted her back and cheered.

'See...? Go ahead. Go to the World Tree and accept the Primordial Darkness.'

'What about you?'

'I'll follow you soon. I'll take care of him first.' Suho turned his head and glared at the Nightmare Apostle.

'Go ahead. I'll catch up soon.' Suho's eyes as he looked at the Nightmare Apostle were cold.

'Beru, let's go.'

[KIEEEEEEEEEK!]

At that moment, Suho and Beru's figures shot towards the Nightmare Apostle like black streaks of light.

[You can't kill me!]

'I know. But I can stop you.' Suho's sword mercilessly slashed at the Nightmare Apostle's entire body.

'You'll stay here and suffer. Forever.'

[Gack...!]

'Why? Don't you like nightmares?'

The Nightmare Apostle flinched at Suho's persistent and vicious attacks. Meanwhile, Sirka was already running far away. Across the black surface. This was no longer her nightmare.

[The King of the Snow Folk, the Frost Monarch, urges the successor to hurry.]

Sillad's voice reached Sirka's ears. She ran without rest, following that voice. She didn't need the ice pillar or the ice path anymore. With the Elven Footsteps, she lightly stepped on the pitch-black Sea of The Afterlife and desperately ran towards the World Tree. The sounds of battle between Suho and the Nightmare Apostle gradually faded behind her. So did the Nightmare Apostle's screams.

'Almost there!'

The silhouette of the World Tree, faintly visible in Sirka's vision, grew larger and larger. It appeared majestically at the edge of the dimension. Sillad's voice also became clearer. And when she finally arrived, she saw that the shadow wasn't the World Tree. No, to be exact, it was something massive wrapped around the World Tree.

'...!'

Sirka instinctively leaped to the side. And a giant serpent's tail struck down on the spot where she was standing.

[Nidhög, the serpent that gnaws at the roots of the World Tree.]

A giant serpent coiling around the roots of the World Tree. A being that sucked the nutrients of the World Tree and never left. It was blocking Sirka's path.

'Nidhög...!'

Sirka's eyes flashed with determination. She already knew about Nidhög from Suho.

But seeing it in person... It was incredibly huge! The giant serpent coiled around the World Tree's roots, glared at Sirka, and roared. Black poison flowed from its mouth.

[Hurry! You have to find the Frost Monarch among its heads!] Beru, who had suddenly appeared beside Sirka, urged her on.

Suho, who was fighting the Nightmare Apostle, had sent only Beru here.

[Devour it before it devours you! That's all you have to do!]

'How can I eat something like that...?!' Sirka screamed at Beru's words.

She wasn't exaggerating. What could she possibly do against such an absurd creature?!

But despite her words, Sirka's body was already moving. Now that the Monarch's power was so close, she couldn't back down.

'Let's go...!'

Sirka charged towards Nidhögg. Using the pinnacle of the Elven Footsteps. Her feet stepped on the World Tree's massive trunk, and she leaped vertically. Nidhögg's heads blocked her path.

A tremendous pressure engulfed her. Sirka's breath hitched from the overwhelming presence, as if a giant mountain range was moving. One of Nidhögg's giant heads struck down like lightning. She barely dodged it by twisting her body, but still was swept away by the shock wave. The thrown Sirka let out a low groan.

A pain that felt like her entire body was being twisted swept over her.

[Get a hold of yourself! This is only the beginning!] Beru warned.

The giant serpent's body coiled around the World Tree. Sirka barely managed to get up, looking at that.

'There it is.' She found it. One of the six heads was glowing ominously, different from the others. She instinctively knew that the power she was destined to inherit was within.

Nidhögg's attacks rained down, and the bark exploded. The shockwaves were strong enough to shake the World Tree. But Sirka used those fragments as a foothold and jumped even higher. She climbed on top of Nidhögg's giant body and began to run across it. It was difficult. This wasn't the ice path created for her.

It was the path on a giant serpent trying to shake her off. Nidhögg's body thrashed, and its maws opened in all directions, trying to devour Sirka. The attack was so overwhelming; it felt like the entire dimension was trying to swallow her whole.

'Not yet!'

But Sirka didn't give up. She continued running across Nidhögg's writhing scales. The poison raining down from above gradually contaminated her body. It was so potent that it felt like the skin was melting, not just being contaminated. But Sirka kept running... Forward, along the serpent's path. Towards the maw that was wide open towards her.

[Have you finally arrived?]

And at that moment she felt a small hand gently patting her head. It was Beru. And...

[Good work.]

'...!'

Beru's body suddenly began to swell rapidly. And the tremendous power contained within spread in all directions. The enlarged ant grinned and held up Nidhögg's maw, which was about to chomp down on Sirka. Looking down at her, who had come this far on her own Beru said,

[I'll help you from now on.]

5

CREATORS' THOUGHTS



Craftyprogamer

Solo Leveling: Ragnarok [FAN TL] Chapter 316 - Chapter 314

Chapter 316: Chapter 314

GRAAAAAAAAAAAH!

Beru's hand blocked Nidhögg's mouth, and a fearsome roar erupted from within.

Crack!

The hand, which was supporting the creature's palate, was pressed down by an overwhelming force. The oppressive feeling that at any moment, those vicious fangs would instantly chomp down and grind them to bits overwhelmed Sirka. But Beru, resisting that, was smiling. No... Grinning broadly. And as he stood on two legs, supporting the creature's maw, he put more force into the hand that was propping up the palate...

Crack!

'...!'

Nidhögg's giant mouth was forced open. And a look of bewilderment appeared in its eyes.

[I'll buy you some time. Go in.]

'...!'

Sirka's eyes widened. Even as Beru was supporting the giant serpent's maw, his gaze was still fixed on her.

[Go in and claim it. With your own hands!]

At Beru's words, Sirka immediately leaped into Nidhogg's mouth, which was being forcibly held open without a shred of hesitation. It was an important moment. She had already reached her destination and found the head where the power of the Frost Monarch was hidden among Nidhogg's six heads. All that remained was for Sirka to enter those deep, dark jaws and find the Primordial Darkness. The final stage of the succession ceremony. And until then, buying time was Beru's role.

3

Rumble!

Nidhogg's giant body coiled around the World Tree. And as he supported himself like that, Nidhogg's five other maws opened towards Beru and launched a fierce attack.

Graaaaaaaaah!

Kyaaaaaaaaaaaaa!

It felt like the whole world was collapsing and rushing towards Beru to devour him. An overwhelming pressure, similar to a natural disaster. But even in the midst of all that, he didn't retreat an inch. Rather, he was overjoyed. A grin spread on his face.

[It's been a while.]

Indeed. It truly had been a long time, hadn't it? Since he had a battle where he could unleash all his power without holding back. Beru had been gathering strength by devouring numerous magic stones and magic crystals. And he had been saving that power. The reason was, of course, to avoid hindering Suho's growth. Although he wanted to step forward and help him, that would ultimately take away Suho's experience points. But not now. Suho was fighting the Nightmare Apostle far away, and helping Sirka here had nothing to do with Suho's leveling up. Moreover, the most important thing was...

That this place was a 'nightmare.'

Thanks to the Nightmare Apostle. Because of the nightmare realm he created, Beru could unleash all the power he had gathered here and return to his original state. Like a dream that disappears when you wake up. Just like the Nightmare Apostle's body

returning to normal no matter how much it was wounded by Suho's attacks. Therefore... Beru could release all the power he had saved up.

[KIEEEEEEEEEEEK!]

BOOM!

Black steam erupted from his body. It blazed like an active volcano. And finally, it exploded.

[KIEEEEEEEEEEEK!]

Beru swelled up even more against Nidhögg, who was attacking from all directions. Black wings spread from his back. That form was the same as the disaster-class magical beast that once devastated Jeju Island. The giant ant and the six-headed serpent clashed fiercely.

1

BOOM!

The giant fist struck the face of Nidhögg, that was charging from the side. With a bomb-like explosion, the hideous maw was crushed and bounced back. At the same time, another head from the opposite side spat poison at Beru. Who, while still supporting the jaws that Sirka entered with one hand, viciously ripped out one of Nidhögg's fangs with the other.

Crack!

A groan could be heard from Nidhögg's head that had its fang pulled out. Beru didn't care and threw the fang, piercing the eye of the one that was spitting poison.

KYAAAAAK!

The scream was delicious. Beru smacked his lips, he wanted to devour Nidhögg. He wondered what its flesh would taste like. But unfortunately, he didn't have the time for that now. The head that had been spitting poison, was now one-eyed and even more enraged, attacking fiercely. That's what he wanted.

2

[Bring it on! I'm invincible today!]

7

BOOM!

The World Tree shook. The dimension itself seemed to tremble from the battle between the two giant beings. Sirka gritted her teeth as she felt the tremors. Even though she couldn't see, she could tell that an incredible battle was raging outside. The surrounding mana vividly conveyed that fact.

Crack! Crunch!

Beru's claws pierced Nidhögg's scales and tore at the wound. But the injury regenerated in an instant. Similarly, Nidhögg's fangs shattered Beru's carapace. But that also recovered instantly with black steam.

[It's no use! Do you know how many magic crystals the Little Monarch got me?!]

At the same time, even fiercer black steam exploded from his entire body. Just like when he dominated the battlefield alongside the Shadow Monarch. But Beru knew himself.

'It's still not enough.' He was thirsty. His power was still lacking. He wasn't at this level when he fought alongside his master.

2

Skill, 'Devour'

Beru, the marshal who led the charge on the front lines of the Shadow Legion, slaughtering and devouring enemies, had the ability to grow stronger the more he consumed his foes, and this was his unique talent, different from the other marshals.

If Igris and Belion were combat weapons that gradually grew stronger through numerous battles, Beru was a strategic weapon who underwent a unique evolution, absorbing a portion of the memories and abilities of the enemies he devoured. In a way, he was a being that fit the description of 'Evolution' even better than the Apostle of Evolution.

4

However, to unleash all that power, the endless mana of the Shadow Monarch Sung Jinwoo was essential. So a battle like this, where he had to rely solely on brute force, only made Beru feel frustrated, as if he was fighting with heavy shackles on his limbs. But... Something could be done about that.

[I'll borrow your power for a moment.]

2

Beru's gaze suddenly met the Nightmare Apostle's, who was fighting Suho far away. The Nightmare Apostle felt a sense of foreboding.

Thud! Thud!

Beru's body suddenly began to grow larger.

Crack!

The giant ant's hand grabbed the maw that Sirka entered.

[...?!]

[N-no way...!]

The Nightmare Apostle was aghast. Beru's size was now equal to Nidhögg! But he could immediately recognize the origin of that power.

[How did you get my nightmare power?!] Beru just smiled at his shocked question.

The sight of him mercilessly striking Nidhögg's heads with his giant fists was truly spectacular. The two giant monsters, now equal in size, wrestling with each other filled the battlefield with brutality; it was impossible to approach them without losing one's life. And Suho, who was attacking him from the front, answered the question the Nightmare Apostle had.

'Don't be surprised. Beru devoured your brain and absorbed all the memories of your research.'

2

[What?!]

The Nightmare Apostle was shocked and turned to look at Suho. The repeated pain didn't matter anymore. The fact that all his research records were stolen was a blow that shook his very soul.

BOOM!

The black steam erupting from Beru's body was a bit different now. That giant form was an illusion mixed with the power of nightmares. But at the same time, it was a nightmare with a physical form... At this moment, Beru had literally become 'Nidhögg's Nightmare.'

1

Graaaaaaaah!

Nidhögg's six heads, which had been attacking fiercely, were thrown into confusion. Beru's form was starting to look bigger and bigger. As if it was about to swallow the entire dimension. His actual size hadn't increased. It was an illusion created with the power of nightmares. But the pressure was real, at least in Nidhögg's eyes, Beru's form was now several times larger than himself.

Groan...

The giant serpent faltered for the first time. Even though he knew it was an illusion, he couldn't help but instinctively cower.

[How dare you! Steal the evolution I perfected...!]

The Nightmare Apostle, watching from afar, gritted his teeth. Even as he was fighting Suho, seeing his power being used by Beru enraged him. But there was nothing he could do.

[My, my power...]

Meanwhile, he was being torn to shreds by Suho and the shadow sharks. There was nothing he could do here. All he was able to do was to watch Beru's overwhelming battle from afar, frustrated and resentful.

[KIEEEEEEEEEEEK!]

Graaaaaaaaaaah!

Beru's giant illusion coiled tightly around Nidhögg's body. It was a hallucination made of nightmares, but the pressure felt true. Nidhögg's six heads thrashed around in confusion. He couldn't tell what was real and what was not. And as a result...

Ding!

[You have completed the quest.]

'Hmm?' Finally, welcome news arrived before Suho.

[Quest: Request of the Frost Monarch]

[Make the descendant of Sillad, the ice elf Sirka, the next Monarch.]

[Sirka's vessel is still too weak to contain the Primordial Darkness.]

[Protect Sirka and help her grow until she can inherit the Primordial Darkness.]

The quest that Sillad had given him was now complete.

That meant!

Groan!

Nidhogg's head, which Sirka had entered, burst like a balloon.

BOOM!

...And the form of Sirka was revealed from within. She was floating in the air with her eyes closed, enveloped in black fog.

[N-no!]

The Nightmare Apostle desperately mustered his last strength. Even though Suho's sword was piercing his body, he couldn't let the Primordial Darkness be stolen right before his eyes! Sirka, who was closing her eyes and accepting the Primordial Darkness, suddenly saw her vision turn white. And a terrible sight unfolded.

'...!'

In that illusion, the forms of her fellow ice elves freezing to death in the blizzard appeared before Sirka's eyes. The white-pale corpses lined up before her. The power of the Frost Monarch. It was a disaster that tormented the ice elves more than anyone. The nightmare whispered.

-Aren't you scared?

-Of that terrible power?

-The power that drove your people to death?

The whispers of the Nightmare Apostle dug into Sirka's ears. But...

'You're wrong.' Sirka was smiling.

'I'm not afraid of this nightmare.'

Sirka spread her arms wide and accepted the Primordial Darkness with her entire body.

'I, No... We, were born from nightmares.'

Flash!

Finally, Sirka's closed eyes opened.

'We are the ice elves, born in the harsh cold. And I...'

Her eyes were filled with the Primordial Darkness.

'Am the king of the ice elves, Sirka.'

2

And at those words, Sillad, who was waiting for her at the end of the darkness, smiled with satisfaction.

[The King of the Snow Folk, the Frost Monarch, passes on his darkness to his successor.]

Ding!

At that moment, the quest reward arrived for Suho, who had fulfilled Sillad's request.

[The 'Winter of Frost' descends upon the World Tree.]

Crack!

Suddenly, the World Tree began to freeze from its roots. Sirka smiled at Suho from the center of that.

'Now I'll be the nightmare of the World Tree.'

Saying that it was the World Tree's turn to experience the nightmare they had suffered, Sirka just smiled. With a pure and innocent expression.

[The King of the Snow Folk, the Nightmare Monarch Sirka, is born.]

5

Just like that, Sirka returned as the true Nightmare of the World Tree.

CREATORS' THOUGHTS



Craftyprogamer

Solo Leveling: Ragnarok [FAN TL] Chapter 317 - Chapter 315

Chapter 317: Chapter 315

An unexpected winter came to the Sea of The Afterlife. White frost began to form on the bark of the World Tree from the harsh blizzard raging around it, and that coldness spread to the roots. White ice began to spread in all directions on the surface of the black water of the distant abyss.

In that form it infinitely spread out like a spiderweb. No, like countless snowflakes. The ice patterns gradually became more and more complex, and eventually, a giant crystal grew on the surface, blooming into an ice flower. The geometric patterns drawn by the white frost shone in different forms every moment, moving and dancing as if they were alive. Like a kaleidoscope.

It was a truly spectacular sight. The white world spreading out, centered around the World Tree.

The ice garden endlessly expanding. True winter had finally come to the sea of death. Under the blessing of the newly born King of the Snow Folk, the Nightmare Monarch Sirka.

'You too... try to endure it.' Sirka spoke to the World Tree.

'The winter we've suffered.'

And in that form, the image of Sillad suddenly overlapped with hers. Indeed, the previous Frost Monarch was recalling a very old memory through Sirka's eyes.

His fellow elves fleeing the cold. The corpses of those devoured and killed by the rampaging Elvenwood. And the form of Elvenwood itself, eventually freezing to death, unable to withstand the winter...

Suddenly, he wondered.

How long would it last?

Could the World Tree really withstand this harsh winter?

What if the World Tree froze like Elvenwood?

What would happen to the Sea of The Afterlife?

What then?

But Sillad already knew the answer.

[...Spring will come.] Sillad's voice suddenly echoed.

The World Tree had already been dead for a long time. He didn't know if it was because of Nidhögg, who was gnawing at its roots, or because the Absolute Being who planted it here had died. But he knew one thing for sure.

[When spring comes, new life sprouts.]

Knowing that...

This harsh, cold wind was no longer a nightmare.

When this harsh winter passed...

This place too would...

Groan!

[KYAAA?!]

Suddenly, Nidhögg thrashed violently and desperately escaped from Beru's grasp. It began to climb up the World Tree to escape the cold. He smacked his lips and watched the creature's rapidly retreating form.

Beru, whose body had been enlarged by the power of the apostle, was gradually shrinking. The Nightmare's power weakening.

[The Nightmare Sanctuary is collapsing.]

[Debuff: 'Nightmare' is dispersing.]

Crack!

Suddenly, the nightmare realm that had dominated the surroundings began to crumble like a sandcastle.

[N-no...!] The Nightmare Apostle screamed.

His plan had failed! He was confident that he had considered every possible scenario, but it had been easily thwarted by a single, unexpected variable.

[...I simply lacked information.] He gritted his teeth and glared at Suho with a venomous expression.

[If I had more time! If I had researched you a little more...!]

Suho stopped the onslaught and shrugged at that. There was no reason to attack him anymore. As the surrounding nightmares crumbled, the Nightmare Apostle's form, which

had taken Sirka's appearance and transformed into a dark elf, was also scattering. Suho smirked at his frustration and spoke,

'Why? Don't you like evolution? Sometimes, failure is also a stepping stone for growth.'

The Nightmare Apostle, who was about to retort, paused and closed his mouth. Then he finally lowered his head and muttered weakly,

[Is this also... part of the process of evolution...?] There was no longer any anger or resistance in his voice. His eyes, now calm, looked at the surrounding scenery.

[...That makes sense.]

Sirka's harsh winter was encroaching upon his nightmare from all directions. Habits were truly terrifying.

Even as he was being helplessly defeated and dying, his mind was habitually going over his past research.

Evolution.

What was the evolution he had been so desperately researching? And... facing death, he finally came to see it from a completely different perspective.

[...Well, sometimes the evolution of the world takes precedence over the evolution of the individual.

Especially for a world like this, a world that lost its god and is dying.]

'Don't just mumble to yourself and say it in a way I can understand.'

[I'm basically saying I lost.] A smile had formed on the Nightmare Apostle's face. It was an expression that seemed somewhat disappointed, but at the same time, relieved.

[Seriously. How did this happen? For me to become... fertilizer for evolution...]

Whoosh—

With those words, his body completely crumbled. Like a dream that disappears when you wake up, he scattered into dust.

Ding!

[You have defeated the Nightmare Apostle.]

And as if on cue, system messages appeared before Suho.

[Level Up!]

[Level Up!]

[Level Up!...]

[KIEEEEEEEEEK!]

Beru's hand suddenly grabbed the scattering remains of the Nightmare Apostle from the air. And he smacked his lips chuckling.

[It would be a waste to lose this power.]

Beru had already devoured the Nightmare Apostle's brain and consumed a portion of his memories.

So he could tell. The moment they left this place, he wouldn't be able to use the power of nightmares anymore.

He didn't care about that intangible skill. Although it was effective even against Nidhögg, it was ultimately a nameless power that was only useful for stalling. But there was something else. All the research records of the Nightmare Apostle still remained within Beru. So he could use his unfinished studies to do this.

Crack!

Suddenly, the last remnants of the Nightmare Apostle began to gather in Beru's hand. The traces of his enlightenment, research, and experiments were merging into one.

Crack! Crack! Crack!

Smaller and denser. Beru used his 'Devour' ability to compress all that energy. Before this nightmare ended, he scraped together its remaining traces. Finally, a small crystal formed on Beru's palm. It was shining pink, a substance much purer and denser than Starpieces.

[Little Monarch.] Beru respectfully offered it to Suho.

[I present to you the crystal containing all the research and enlightenment of the Nightmare Apostle.]

Ding!

[Obtained Item: 'Seed of Evolution'.]

'Seed?'

Suho received the special seed that Beru extracted from the Nightmare Apostle. It was an unexpected reward. But he didn't have the time to examine it because the succession ceremony was finally over. Just like that, as time began to flow again, Suho and Beru were ejected from 'Sirka's Dream.' At that last moment, Suho saw the World Tree being covered in frost. And he smiled.

'I guess I can use that.'

Flash!

When he opened his eyes again, Suho and Beru were standing on a snow-covered field. They had returned to reality. And at the same time, all the battles that were raging in this land ended.

The villains who were possessed by the Outer Gods,

The power of nightmares that sprouted from their blood,

And even the harsh winter that swept across the snowfield,

All of them disappeared in an instant. The Hunters of the Korean Association looked around in confusion.

"Wh-what?"

"What just happened?"

"Is it over?"

"Why all of a sudden?"

"Don't let your guard down...!"

But no matter how vigilantly they looked around, nothing else appeared. It felt like they had just woken up from a dream. Among them, only Woo Jinchul instinctively turned his gaze to look for Suho.

And there, Suho and Beru were already approaching the pillar where Sirka was trapped. The hard ice crumbled, and Sirka confidently walked out from within. Her appearance was still that of a small and frail ice elf. But the tremendous darkness contained within...

'Oh my god...'

It was enough to shock Woo Jinchul. It was a kind of survival instinct. Woo Jinchul, who had witnessed the Monarchs a long time ago, instinctively realized that this small girl had become a Monarch. Sirka, who had successfully returned with the Primordial Darkness, smiled brightly at Suho.

"I've returned."

Suho smiled back.

"Good work."

"Heh..."

Suho's large hand gently patted Sirka's head, and her eyes curved into crescents. Her long ears, characteristic of ice elves, folded back. But it couldn't end just like this.

2

"And..."

Sirka, reborn as the King of the Snow Folk and the Nightmare Monarch, sincerely greeted Suho once again. With the utmost respect.

"Thank you for your help, Little Monarch."

Ding!

[The King of the Snow Folk, the Nightmare Monarch, pledges allegiance to you.]

[The King of the Snow Folk, the Nightmare Monarch, offers you the 'Nightmare of the World Tree'.]

[Blessing: 'Nightmare of the World Tree']

[Blessing of the King of the Snow Folk, the Nightmare Monarch.]

[The Nightmare Monarch Sirka pledges allegiance to you.]

[Winter has come to the Sea of The Afterlife, centered around the World Tree.]

[This harsh winter will gradually spread throughout the Sea of The Afterlife.]

[Effect: 'Nightmare of the World Tree']

[The effect of Debuff: 'Death' which occurs in the Sea of The Afterlife, is weakened.]

"Oh?" Suho's eyes widened at the unexpected reward.

Debuff: 'Death,' which decreased HP in real-time when you entered the Sea of The Afterlife. The restriction caused by it was now being weakened by the cold!

"It's a bit ironic that the colder the Sea of The Afterlife gets, the less likely you are to die."

1

[That's why it's a nightmare for the World Tree.] Beru quickly explained. He had gained much more knowledge thanks to the Nightmare Apostle's research. He had evolved to be an even better explanation bug!

2

[It seems like Debuff: 'Death' exists to protect the World Tree, which is somewhere in the Sea of The Afterlife.]

"To prevent anyone from finding the World Tree?"

[That must be it. It's that important.]

"Conversely, it means it's now much easier to find the World Tree."

[Do you really plan to go in yourself? It's still dangerous. Maybe later, when the cold has completely covered the Sea of The Afterlife...]

"No. It's more meaningful now. And I'm not going in myself." Suho grinned with a satisfied expression.

He immediately summoned Harmakan and conveyed the new orders to all the demons in the Sea of The Afterlife. That news spread like wildfire, eventually reaching the ears of Esil Radiru, the King of Demons, who was on the largest ship exploring the Sea.

"Finally, some good news." Esil smirked.

"I thought I felt a breeze coming from somewhere."

The Sea of The Afterlife was always still and unchanging, except for the attacks of the hungry souls lurking in the abyss. But a faint breeze had been blowing from somewhere since a while ago. It was still too far away to be called a 'cold wind,' but the 'familiar scent' carried on that breeze was important. And Esil knew what that fragrance was. A smell that made her mouth water even from afar...

"Finally found the direction." Esil pointed towards the source of the wind and ordered all the demons in the Sea of The Afterlife,

"Turn the ship!"

Finally, all the demons' ships began to sail towards the World Tree.

CREATORS' THOUGHTS



Craftyprogamer

Solo Leveling: Ragnarok [FAN TL] Chapter 318 - Chapter 316

Chapter 318: Chapter 316

The death of the Nightmare Apostle.

His plans, which he believed to be perfect, crumbled. But his passing, which transpired just like the vanishing of a fleeting dream, left behind a greater legacy than expected. Of course, it was all in Suho's favor. First, it started with the Sea of The Afterlife. At the beginning a gentle breeze was the only sign of change, but the effect wasn't insignificant. The atmosphere of death that permeated the Sea of The Afterlife had remained unchanged since the beginning of time. However as the cold wave that started from the World Tree gradually spread, the stagnant air began to move slowly. Of course, it wasn't a big change. Only the area close to the World Tree froze over. Considering the vast scale of the Sea of The Afterlife, it was just a slight change in temperature of the black seawater. But...

"Good. It's getting colder. This is definitely the right direction." Esil smacked her lips and gave orders to the ships the demons were riding on.

At the same time, she calmly observed the surroundings. With the direction to the World Tree revealed, she realized something. As mentioned earlier, the Sea of The Afterlife was a stagnant space of death, a garbage dump where the scraps of souls drifted aimlessly. And at the same time, it was a sewer of dimensions, overgrown with weeds that lived by consuming those scraps. Considering the nature of those weeds, eventually all of them would inevitably migrate towards the World Tree... That was the result they were seeing now.

Slash! Slash!

"My King! The weeds are increasing in number!"

"Their attacks are endless!"

"Calm down. It's only natural." Esil, the King of Demons, the Monarch of Gluttony, wasn't fazed by the continuous reports. Even though the weeds increased exponentially, hindering the demons' fleet as it approached the World Tree.

Kyaaaaaaaaa—!

Even those, who had been bravely exploring the Sea of the Afterlife, were visibly flustered. The weeds' attacks, coming from all directions, were overwhelming and terrifying.

Slash—! Crack—! Crack, Crack—!

The situation became urgent. If they were careless for even a moment, the weeds would gnaw at the bottoms of the ships and pierce holes in them. Black seawater would seep through, along with it the weeds would extend their roots into the ship and attack the demons. If they weren't careful, the ship they worked so hard to build would be completely devoured by the black abyss in no time. However there were those who confronted the invaders.

[These damn weeds!]

[Alright! Let's see who wins!]

The shadow dwarves gritted their teeth and rushed to repair the ship with hammers and saws.

[Eat as much as you want!]

[We'll just repair it faster!]

[It's on! Let's see who's faster!]

[Our victory is certain as long as there are enough materials!]

1

A deadly competition started. A fierce contest between the speed at which the weeds damaged the ship and the speed at which the shadow dwarves repaired it. Black steam flared from their bodies as they burned with competitive spirit, determined to win the race. The action was extremely intense, but the result was already decided. The closer they got to the World Tree, the more weeds appeared. Although the rate at which the ship was damaged increased, the materials to expand it also became more abundant. As a result, the shadow dwarves weren't satisfied with just repairing and expanding the vessel in real-time... By a narrow margin, the growth rate was greater. Of course, the

balance of this tug-of-war could still be broken if they were careless, but even that only fueled the dwarves' competitive spirit.

[Kyaha! This is great!]

[It's been a while since I've worked this frantically!]

[I would have no regrets even if I died now! Although... I'm already dead! Uhahaha!]

3

The dwarves burst into laughter as they sawed the weeds' remains. Of course, if there were only dwarves here, the result would have been reversed long ago. That's how overwhelming the number of weeds was, but they weren't alone here. So for the dwarves to be able to focus on their work, all the demons and shadow spiders were engaged in a fierce battle. Even the Elvenwoods, including Alfheim, which had been reduced to keels for all the warships, were extending their roots, directly capturing the weeds and sucking out their life force. Of course, those were just acting on instinct, but as a result, the demons' warship became a self-growing, self-repairing ship, a perfect ghost vessel... One thought possible to exist only in legends or myths. And since those on board were actually demons, it was truly the most fitting ship of death for the Sea of The Afterlife.

At this point, no matter how hard they tried, the weeds couldn't block the path of the demons' fleet crossing the waves in a straight line. Rather, they became stepping stones, making the warship even bigger. And eventually...

"Oh, my King!"

On the black sea where they couldn't discern the way forward, they finally found it.

"I see thin ice in the distance!"

"...!"

Somewhere ahead, actual cold could be felt, a giant pillar, its end invisible, was faintly noticeable beyond that. Esil grinned and roared,

"Prepare for attack! More of them will come!"

The edge of Winter.

The demons finally reached the World Tree.

3

* * *

Meanwhile,

Suho, who returned to reality, was taking care of other things. Sirka, who returned as a Monarch, was not an issue. The problem was the legacy left behind by the Nightmare Apostle. Especially among them...

'No. 47'

A woman with white skin and pink hair, her appearance so perfect that it was eerie, was slowly turning to dust before Suho's eyes.

"...You don't have to look at me like that."

Crackle.

No. 47, disintegrating into tiny pink cells and scattering like pollen, looked at Suho with calm eyes and said,

"I am the ultimate toy that the Doctor perfected after 46 experiments. Since my creator, the Doctor, has passed away, it is only natural for me to lose the power that sustains me and disappear."

There was no tremor in No. 47's voice as she slowly disappeared like scattering pollen. When Suho barged into the Apostle of Evolution's lab, No. 47 showed panic, But now, facing her own death, she didn't seem to have any lingering attachments.

Crackle.

"After all, I don't have a soul. I have an ego, but even that is nothing without a foundation..."

"So you're not afraid of death because you don't have a soul?"

"It means that the concept of death doesn't apply to me in the first place." No. 47 calmly answered Suho's question, her body had already half disappeared. The sight of her scattering in the wind like pollen was ironically beautiful.

"So the shadow power won't work on me either. That's something the Doctor specifically took care of when creating me."

"..."

From those words, Suho could tell how wary the Apostle of Evolution was of the shadow power. It was only natural for him to try to avoid the situation where his painstakingly

developed creation was stolen as a shadow soldier... So he didn't give No. 47 a soul, he created a doll that could exist solely with a body. To put it bluntly, it was the pinnacle of a humanoid AI robot created with the apostle's power and effort. And Beru, who knew his research records better than anyone, narrowed his eyes and muttered from Suho's shoulder,

[My liege, not only No. 47, but all the previous test subjects are disintegrating, having lost their center.]

It was as he said. When Suho looked around, the 'otherworldly weapons' held by the villains who came from China were turning to dust and scattering like No. 47. The sight resembled pollen spreading in spring. It wasn't just his imagination. Suho turned his gaze back to No. 47 and asked Beru,

"Beru, tell me. How did he make these guys? Briefly..."

[Pollen.] Beru answered, recalling the Apostle of Evolution's memories.

[Various kinds of magic are mixed, but the base material is basically Elvenwood pollen.]

"He made them using the Apostle of Paradise's power?"

[Yes. The Apostle of Evolution had no talent for creation. His research was like gathering various ingredients before him and cooking. Even his ideas didn't deviate much from imitating someone.]

There was no need to ask who he was trying to imitate... Sung Jinwoo. The most astonishing and terrifying being he had ever seen. All the research the Apostle of Evolution conducted must have been to become a being like the Shadow Monarch...

"Pollen..."

Suho's gaze followed No. 47's cells, scattering everywhere. And he suddenly looked down at the 'Seed of Evolution' he was holding.

[Item: Seed of Evolution]

[Acquisition Difficulty: ??]

[Type: Consumable]

[A seed made by compressing the energy left behind by the Apostle of Evolution.]

"..."

An item that didn't give him any clues even when he looked at its description. Although it was made and handed over to him by Beru even the shadow ant himself didn't know how to use this seed.

"How should I use this?"

[...My apologies. I just gathered the power and compressed it, so I don't know its exact use. But I definitely removed the energy of Itarim, so it won't have any harmful effects on you, my liege.]

"Hmm."

Suho looked away from the Seed of Evolution and called someone else.

"Arsha, come out."

Buzzzz—

As soon as he finished speaking, small bees gathered from the surroundings. Those insects gathered together and transformed into a small fairy-like figure, bowing deeply.

[You called?] Queen Bee Arsha appeared.

Although her main body was still trapped in Suho's shadow dungeon, the worker bees she commanded always swarmed around him. Even without explicit orders, they diligently spread out and searched the surroundings to help Suho. Since her main body was permanently held hostage in his shadow, Arsha was always one step from being annihilated if she didn't remain faithful to Suho. But from the moment Ragnar was born in that world, she had been voluntarily serving as Suho's loyal subject.

[Do you have any orders for me?]

"See that pollen? Summon more worker bees and gather it all." Suho commanded Arsha

[...Excuse me?] Confused by the puzzling order, She turned her head and carefully examined No. 47 and the scenery created by the pink cells. Only then, a glint appeared in her eyes, and she nodded.

[Pollen... I understand. That's easy work for the bees.]

Buzzzzzz—

The worker bees began to work.



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Solo Leveling: Ragnarok [FAN TL] Chapter 319 - Chapter 317

Chapter 319: Chapter 317

Bzzzzz-!

Following Suho's command, Arsha's worker bees began to move busily. They carefully collected the pink cells scattered by No. 47 and the otherworldly weapons, as if gathering pollen. One cell per bee.

[More worker bees will be needed.] Gauging the relatively insufficient quantity, Arsha's eyes gleamed.

Weeeeeng-!

At that moment, her influence spread in all directions. The ordinary bees living in North Korea, touched by that energy, began to abandon their own queen and follow Arsha instead, as if possessed. Their ever-increasing numbers flew up all at once, chasing the pink dust. Suho's order to collect all this pollen confused her. However she wasn't curious about his intentions. The important thing now was that she could finally be useful to Suho. What assistance had Arsha provided him since becoming his subordinate...?

None...

'Maybe Reconnaissance?' The shadow soldiers alone were enough for that.

'What about thoroughly searching North Korea to track the Elvenwoods...?' Even that ultimately became meaningless. Because the moment the perception-impairing barrier disappeared, the Elvenwoods revealed themselves all over the world.

Well, if one wanted to think deeply about it, she had done some minor errands, but that was hardly sufficient. From Arsha's perspective, who had to gain Sung Suho's, the Monarchs' Priest, favor to be recognized as a candidate for the next Monarch, she couldn't help but become more and more impatient as days passed. But finally, the opportunity had come.

[I can't miss this chance!]

Arsha put all her effort into tracking each and every pink cell.

* * *

Meanwhile, Suho wasn't just waiting around either.

'Shadow Exchange'

Poof!

The moment Suho suddenly disappeared, Association Hunters next to him widened their eyes and were flustered. Only Woo Jinchul seemed used to this situation, calmly instructing them to secure the surroundings and take care of the injured. Then he resumed the search for the traces of the Cult of the Outer Gods that he had been conducting here.

* * *

Flash!

Meanwhile, Suho returned to the lab where the 'Doctor', or rather the Apostle of Evolution, had been hiding.

Pssss-

"As expected, it's the same here too."

Looking around the lab, just as he predicted, the same thing was happening here as well. The pink lumps that the Apostle of Evolution had left unfinished were disintegrating inside the test tubes.

"Harmakan, let's take all of these too."

[Yes, Master.]

These cells were in transparent glass tubes, so there was no need for the worker bees to intervene. They could just move the containers themselves. Harmakan, not satisfied with just faithfully carrying out Suho's order, took every single speck of dust he could find in the lab and brought it into the shadow dungeon. Originally, the demonic spirit race enjoyed this kind of experimentation. And thanks to Beru devouring the Apostle of Evolution's memories, he judged that if the two of them put their heads together, they would be able to make use of the things in this lab, somehow. Then he found it...

[Master, there's a stone tablet here too.]

'Itarim's Stone Tablet'

Harmakan brought the Itarim's Stone Tablet he found in the corner of the lab to Suho.

"Hmm. They definitely look alike. As expected, apostles seem to be communicating with each other using these stone tablets, right?"

[Not only that, but now I see that they can even connect their locations and teleport.]

The villains were teleported from China this time. It was certain that they were using the stone tablets like the 'Shadow Exchange' skill, linking Gates to each other.

"The samples have increased. Does that make it easier to analyze?" At Suho's question, Harmakan smiled meaningfully and nodded.

[Yes. I think we can backtrack now.]

"Oh, to where the other apostles are?"

[That's right. Since they're stone tablets that can communicate with each other, we can 'invade' from this side too.]

"Start right away."

Flash!

At that command, he immediately wrapped the Itarim's Stone Tablets held in his hands with magic. The complex and ornate looking magic circle began to dismantle and analyze the stone tablets in earnest. Meanwhile, Harmakan asked Suho about his intentions in collecting the pink cells.

[But Master, what are you aiming for? What do you want me to do with these cells?]
Suho just smiled and replied,

"I don't know."

[...Hmm?]

Harmakan tilted his head at Suho's meaningful smile. His eyes, gleaming like that of a child who had discovered a new toy, made him somewhat resemble a demonic spirit who enjoyed research and experiments.

But there was one thing Harmakan didn't know. Suho had been living with Beru, Igris, Bellion, and countless other shadow soldiers since he was a baby. And of course, that included many shadow demonic spirits. Looking back, Suho had been experiencing mysterious phenomena that ordinary children could never even imagine since the moment he was born. He accepted them as if they were natural. As a result, he was

able to come up with different ideas than the others, in other words... Creativity. This could be considered a result of early education.

"I don't know what I'll do with these either, but let's just imagine for a moment." The information he had learned so far was floating around in Suho's mind as he smiled brightly.

'Angels, the Rulers' soldiers, are born from the fruits of the World Tree.'

'The World Tree survives by feeding on the souls of the dead in the Sea of The Afterlife.'

'Elvenwood survives by feeding on dead elves or other creatures.'

'Like the World Tree.'

'Elvenwood is similar to the World Tree.'

'The Apostle of Evolution used Elvenwood to give birth to test subjects. Although not with fruits, but with pollen.'

Brainstorming done. The floating puzzles finally formed a single picture in Suho's mind.

"Beru."

[You called?]

"You said the Apostle of Evolution's research goal was Father, right?"

[Yes. It's truly ridiculous that he had such a grand dream.]

"And No. 47 is a humanoid soldier that he perfected by imitating shadow soldiers."

[That's right.]

"But if you look at the production principle, isn't it more similar to the process of the Rulers' soldiers being born than to shadow soldiers?"

[...!]

Beru's eyes widened at those words. And he looked through the research records he had devoured one by one, his eyes gleaming.

[That's definitely true!]

It was truly a curious thing. Angels born from the fruits of the World Tree. Test subjects born from the pollen of Elvenwood. As the ecology of the World Tree and Elvenwood

were close, there was definitely a similar mechanism between the two. Creation is the mother of imitation. Imitation is the mother of creation. These two phrases were the ones that the Apostle of Evolution pondered the most while reading human books. And the result of the experiment that began with researching Elvenwood was the immortal doll, No. 47.

"Hmm. An immortal doll without a soul..." Suho stroked his chin and organized the research results the Apostle of Evolution had left behind.

'Perhaps this might be possible...' A way to utilize the cells.

"Beru, from now on, you and Harmakan will continue the research that the Apostle of Evolution left behind."

[Kiek?]

[Oh.] Harmakan's eyes gleamed with an intrigued expression.

[If you just set the direction of the research, we will somehow succeed in whatever you desire, Master.]

The purpose of the research The Apostle of Evolution conducted by killing countless other creatures was his own advancement. But the goal Suho desired was completely different.

"I don't need a soul or ego. What I need is the shell."

5

[...?]

Beru and Harmakan tilted their heads at those words. But in the meantime, Arsha faithfully completed Suho's order.

Bzzzzzzz-!

[I've gathered all the scattered pollen. Without missing a single one.]

"I need more... The more ingredients, the better."

2

[...?]

Arsha's avatar, which appeared before Suho, had a puzzled expression for a moment.

"There are many Elvenwoods in other countries too, right?"

[Ah, you're saying you need all the pollen from all over the world... I understand.]

Arsha, grasping Suho's intentions, nodded and muttered that she would need many more worker bees. If Suho wished, increasing the number of her subordinates was easy. Rather, it was a good thing for her, fundamentally a queen bee... Originally, a queen was a being that could only be born if there were enough worker bees.

[I will open a way for worker bees to go to other countries.] Harmakan used the shadow soldiers that Suho had already spread all over the world as coordinates and created tiny dimensional rifts.

Pooof! Crack! Crackle!

The smallest Gates in the world, just big enough for one or two worker bees to barely pass through, were created on Suho's shadow.

[And I'll set the coordinates so that they can return to the shadow dungeon.]

Bzzzzz-!

Just like that, following Suho's command, Arsha's worker bees spread all over the world. No one noticed the tiny insects flying around the fierce battlefields where countries around the world were putting all their effort into eliminating the giant 'tree-type magical beast' Elvenwood, that appeared simultaneously everywhere. This was because it was only natural for bees to fly around near trees.

* * *

The next place Suho headed to wasn't Russia, but Korea. More precisely, the game company where his uncle, Yoo Jinho, worked.

[Ahjin Soft]

[Solo Leveling: Virtual Reality Laboratory]

"Suho!" Yoo Jinho raised both hands and expressed his joy at his sudden return from North Korea.

"Are you hurt anywhere? Is everything alright?"

Even though he knew Suho had potions, he instinctively checked his condition thoroughly, the very image of a doting father. However, those most shocked by that sight were the ones who had been severely tormented by the meticulous and cold-

hearted Yoo Jinho. In other words, it was the S-rank Hunters gathered here to train in the 'Solo Leveling' game, and the high-ranking Hunters of the large guilds under them.

"Oh my god..."

"I didn't know Yoo Jinho could even smile like that?"

"Scary..."

The sight of him cherishing someone was truly terrifying to others. But Suho was used to his uncle's behavior, so he calmly brought up the main topic.

"Uncle..." Yoo Jinho nodded confidently before he could even finish, his expression dependable.

"Yes, what do you need? Just say it."

Suho's gaze swept the surroundings. 'Solo Leveling' The ambitious project that Ahjin Soft, famous for its virtual reality game, focused all its effort on developing. It was the culmination of modern science, developed with the utmost effort for Hunters to safely gain real-life experience.

'Virtual Reality Capsule' Additionally, this machine was also a life support device for patients with the recently problematic 'Eternal Sleep Disease'. Pointing at those, Suho spoke.

"I was wondering if we could induce the Eternal Sleep Disease, but in reverse."

"...Huh?" Yoo Jinho was momentarily bewildered, unable to understand what Suho meant. The lack of the soul, Eternal Sleep Disease. A state where the body was alive, but the soul had departed to the Sea of The Afterlife. What did it mean to use that in reverse?

"...What do you mean?" Yoo Jinho's expression turned serious.

"I was wondering if it would be possible to send Hunters' souls to another dimension through those capsules."

Fwoosh.

Just in time, the pollen that Arsha had gathered appeared in Suho's hand. Who showed him the pink lump where those cells were gathered.

"From now on, my soldiers will use these cells to create vessels to contain Hunters' souls. It will take time, but... we will make as many as possible." Suho's expression also turned more serious than ever.

3

"So, Uncle. Please make not just a 'virtual reality game', but a simulator where hunters can go to another dimension and fight"

2

"...!"

Not only Yoo Jinho, but all the people in the virtual reality lab were shocked by those words.

Suho continued. "From now on, we will personally cross the universe and invade the invaders... By putting souls into these fake vessels."

"...!"

It was truly innovative, Suho's suggestion completely changed the 'Solo Leveling' project, which had been developed as a training game for Hunters. It was the beginning of a counterattack.

CREATORS' THOUGHTS



Craftyprogamer

Solo Leveling: Ragnarok [FAN TL] Chapter 320 - Chapter 318

Chapter 320: Chapter 318

– I didn't know our son was so talented in art.

It was about a decade ago. When Sung Suho was a kindergartener. His father, Sung Jinwoo, chuckled as he looked at Suho's drawings. He could confidently say that there was no other five-year-old in the world who could draw ants this well. A sketchbook was filled with black crayon scribbles. And among them, a drawing of Beru that he worked especially hard on.

'Should I send him to art school later?' Sung Jinwoo, already thinking about his son's future career path, was admiring the sketchbook when he quickly stopped smiling at the sharp gaze he felt from the side.

– Ahem. – Cha Hae-In couldn't help but chuckle as she saw her husband changing his attitude so quickly. But she soon hardened her expression and spoke in a serious tone,

- This isn't something to laugh about. Look at the latest drawing.
- The latest drawing?

On the last page of the sketchbook was Suho's completed work, titled 'Our House'.

- Suho said there's his huge dad in that black land, does that remind you of anything... Why are you laughing?
- Ah. No reason, I just remembered something funny.

Sung Jinwoo, unable to hold back his laughter as he recalled the 'Sacred Statue of the Monarch' erected in the middle of the world of eternal rest, wiped the tears from his eyes and closed the sketchbook.

1

'Actually, wouldn't it be okay to just laugh it off?' That thought appeared in Jinwoo's brain. But, he couldn't help but change his mind after hearing what Cha Hae-In said next. She had just returned from a parent-teacher conference with the principal of the kindergarten that Suho attended...

* * *

– We've taken care of many children, but we haven't seen any drawings that express friends and family this way.

– ...

– Do you know why Suho draws these kinds of pictures?

– ...

She knew. Of course, she knew. The drawings that Suho made would definitely seem... problematic in the eyes of ordinary people.

A sketchbook that was more than 70% filled with black.

A small house.

A small, ordinary house drawn on the ground,

And the entire page beneath that house filled with black...

Drawings of a five-year-old that seemed emotionally troubled were piled up on the desk. But this... Was actually a perfectly normal illustration. Nevertheless she couldn't

honestly tell her about the Shadow Army. Suho would only be seen as even stranger in this peaceful world if she did. The best his mother could do was to shake her head at the principal's gaze, who was cautiously observing her with a serious expression.

– ...I see. – The principal just sighed at that reaction.

When she first saw these drawings, she wondered if Suho was being abused at home. But she couldn't find any signs of that from the always cheerful boy. And besides, wasn't the woman before her 'Cha Hae-In'? Suho's mother was a global star loved and praised by the entire nation. Furthermore his father was a police officer. There couldn't be a more perfect family in terms of wealth, honor, and morality. So after having several conversations with Suho's mother, the principal convinced herself and came to a reasonable conclusion.

– Perhaps... Suho has an extraordinary talent in art.

'Yes, that must be it.' It wasn't common, but it did happen sometimes, for young children to paint the world as they saw it.

* * *

Thanks to that conclusion, the whole situation ended as a minor event, but Suho's parents had learned something...

– It seems our Suho has a talent for art.

Actually, what was talent anyway? The fact that a five-year-old drew enough pictures to fill his sketchbook was already a 'dedication uncommon among other children'. And... as if to prove that, he actually grew up and got accepted into the prestigious Hankuk University's art department...

* * *

Since he got accepted, Suho's skills developed in a positive direction. However even the kindergarten principal, who first discovered his talent, wouldn't ever have imagined... What kind of painting Suho would draw when he grew up. She wouldn't ever consider the possibility that the picture he would paint would grow so large, it would turn the entire universe upside down, causing a 'revolution' of some sort.

"We have enough materials."

At this moment, a truly grand drawing was being sketched in Suho's mind. Paint, brushes, canvas. He had gathered enough materials, so now it was up to him to decide what kind of picture to paint, how to paint it, and for what purpose.

"I heard from Harmakan that the virtual reality games are actually magical devices utilizing instance dungeons."

"Yes. I have never dreamed that my brother would intervene in the development stage..."

Of course, it was only in the mindspace implementation platform, And the rest of the technical parts were indeed created by Yoo Jinho himself with the help of his employees. But the most crucial step, When they were struggling to implement realistic 'virtual reality' they, unknowingly, received Sung Jinwoo's assistance in solving that problem. He realized that fact much later. In a way, this truth could be a bit disappointing to Yoo Jinho. His masterpiece, which he thought he created with his own effort, was actually only possible thanks to someone's intervention...

But as Harmakan personally used magic and thoroughly analyzed Yoo Jinho's virtual reality capsule, He came to a conclusion.

[Well, not bad. You would have eventually succeeded in implementing virtual reality even without our king's help.] Of course, it would have taken decades longer.

But Harmakan wasn't from a race that would comfort or empathize anyone. First of all, Yoo Jinho himself didn't feel upset when he found out about Sung Jinwoo's intervention. Rather, he shed tears of joy, saying 'As expected of my brother!' So Harmakan only said this because he was genuinely impressed by human technology. In the eyes of the Demonic Spirits, humans were an extremely weak race. But despite that, he couldn't help but acknowledge that the ever-evolving technology of mankind was the best in all dimensions. A race that endlessly evolved because they were born weak, that was humanity. How else could the great and glorious king of darkness, the Shadow Monarch, be born from among them? That's why Harmakan became certain once again after analyzing the capsule that Yoo Jinho developed...

[Highly advanced science is not much different from magic.]

That someday, humans would be able to understand dimensional coordinates with pure scientific power and freely cross dimensional gaps. That's why he was sure...

[You already had all the necessary ingredients. The grace that the Shadow Monarch bestowed upon you only shortened the completion time a little.]

Of course, it would have taken decades longer without that, but with Yoo Jinho's persistence and effort, he would have eventually achieved it. Knowing all that, Sung Jinwoo simply offered a little help. The results of that analysis were shared in their entirety with Suho through Harmakan. So now he began to paint, using all the materials gathered before him, solely to 'help his father'.

'Out-of-body experience'

'Lucid dream'

As Harmakan analyzed, the foundation of the virtual reality game was a magical device that temporarily extracted the soul from a living body and allowed it to indirectly experience an instance dungeon. And it was much safer than the Eternal Sleep Disease or an out-of-body experience, with the soul's coordinates firmly fixed within the game capsule so that it could return to its body at any time.

"We'll create an 'avatar' to temporarily hold the soul using these cells. And we'll put people in that avatar and make it have a 'dream' where it goes to another dimension that actually exists, not an instance dungeon. It will be called a virtual reality game. But in reality, they'll be able to become Hunters online, not offline, and raid real dungeons."

"...That's certainly possible. No, if it's like this..." When Yoo Jinho, who was lost in thought after hearing Suho's explanation, opened his eyes again, He was no longer the doting uncle, but the head of Ahjin Soft. A burning passion blazed in his eyes as he looked at the lump of pink cells Suho held out.

"With this method, even non-Awakened people can participate."

"That's right." Suho also nodded confidently. The picture he painted was the result of reviewing all the research data left by the Apostle of Evolution, combined with Harmakan's knowledge as a Demonic Spirit and the memories Beru devoured.

And Yoo Jinho's mind, having received all that information, was burning with passion. Not just metaphorically, his brain was literally overheating and spinning. Like when he first developed a virtual reality game with his employees in his younger days. As the picture Suho painted was handed over to him, it became even more concrete and detailed. Because Yoo Jinho was undoubtedly the best game developer in this era.

Yoo Jinho, having finished his calculations, smirked. "...This is exciting. You're saying that everyone can become Hunters and fight, not on Earth, but in another dimension? And against the gods of outer universe?"

"W-wait a minute..."

"What are you two talking about?"

'Ah.' Yoo Jinho, focused on his conversation with Suho, belatedly realized that there were many eyes watching them. His gaze subtly swept around.

All the high-ranking Hunters' eyes gathered in the virtual reality lab were focused on them. But except for a few who were directly connected to Suho, like Seo Jiwoo, they all had dumbfounded expressions and couldn't follow their conversation. It was only natural. It was a conversation that only he and Suho understood. But there was no

reason to keep it a secret now. Rather, from now on, he would need the active cooperation of all these Hunters.

The big picture that Suho was painting required a lot of work. Harmakan and Beru would handle the creation of the avatars. And finding the way to the outer gods' realm beyond the dimensional gap was a task Suho had to solve. Then what was his job...?

In the end, it wasn't much different from what he had been doing: 'Games', and gathering countless players to 'enjoy' those games. Yoo Jinho, who had already become the best game developer in the world, was now aiming for the best in the universe.

But he didn't feel any fear or worry. Rather, he was excited as if he had returned to his youth when he followed Sung Jinwoo into dungeons. Just like back then... He had finally found the only way to directly help his brother who was fighting alone in space.

'Brother, you raised a good son.' Yoo Jinho smiled at Suho's face, which resembled Sung Jinwoo from those days, and turned his head to answer the questions of all the Hunters who were focused on him.

Although it seemed like they wanted to ask him about everything, he decided to omit the detailed explanations. What was the point of explaining the game development process to the players? The important thing was the core.

"The game server will be expanded soon."

"...Server expansion?"

"...?"

Perhaps because his answer was a bit unfriendly, Yoo Jinho gave a warm smile at the puzzled reactions of all the Hunters under the S-rank guildmasters and announced,

"In short, our new game will be about the player going out into space and fighting against the outer gods' invasion." And at that moment. The official name for that game crystalized in Yoo Jinho's mind.

[Solo Leveling: Ragnarok]

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An expansion pack for all mankind on Earth, including not only Hunters but also non-Awakened.

"From this moment on, we, Ahjin Soft, will prepare a large-scale project to turn all of humanity into Hunters."

CREATORS' THOUGHTS



Craftyprogamer