

# 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

## **Solo Leveling: Ragnarok [FAN TL] Chapter 312 - Chapter 310 Chapter 312: Chapter 310**

'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—!

## **Solo Leveling: Ragnarok [FAN TL] Chapter 313 - Chapter 311**

### **Chapter 313: Chapter 311**

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.



Craftyprogamer

## **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!

Nidhogg'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 Nidhogg'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 Nidhogg's body. It was a hallucination made of nightmares, but the pressure felt true. Nidhogg'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."

Buzzzzz—

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.]

Buzzzzzzz—

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.

Bzzzzzz-!

[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]

21

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."



Craftyprogamer

## **Solo Leveling: Ragnarok [FAN TL] Chapter 321 - Chapter 319 Chapter 321: Chapter 319**

Arsha spread her worker bees all over the globe as Suho commanded. However, even during that busy time, her main body was leisurely strolling through the shadow dungeon. Relaxing and even humming a song. She was practically imprisoned, unable to leave this place, but that didn't make her feel any discomfort. First and foremost, the queen wasn't a being that busily flew around outside like the worker bees. Therefore, the shadow dungeon, where no one could hope to intrude without Suho's permission, was more comfortable than any other place, safer than the outside world where unknown dangers might lurk. Because of that, Arsha was unconcernedly wandering around, unbothered by the ominous atmosphere outside.

[Hmm...?] She suddenly looked up.

A giant pyramid. The Iron Body training ground, where Ammut resided, filled her vision. Arsha thought they had become quite close recently. Although she didn't know what the always blunt Crocodile's opinion was, she was sure one could call them 'best friends.' And now that they were practically colleagues serving the same master, wouldn't it be better to get along...?

Even though they were different races, Arsha thought she had a lot in common with Ammut. Look at that pyramid. Wasn't that great and strong creature, also living in that huge 'beehive'? At this point, wasn't Ammut also a kind of queen bee? He was also reigning, using the bandaged mummies like worker bees. Of course, Arsha kept this thought to herself, she knew Ammut would be furious if he heard it. She knew him that well. But... At the same time, she had slightly, no, a very dangerous thought.

'It might be a little cool to see Ammut angry.' Why did she feel a slight thrill imagining the strongest person here getting angry?

'Perhaps it's because we're in similar situations.' Arsha chuckled as she looked at the giant pyramid where Ammut was trapped.

Then her gaze shifted upwards to the black ray that was always emanating vertically from the top of the pyramid. A black beam that pierced through the shadow world and soared endlessly into the universe. According to Ammut, that strange dark column

appeared the day the Shadow Monarch's 'illusion' manifested before him. From that moment on, the pyramid, and even Ammut himself began to grow.

[...What is that pillar?]

Recently, all of Arsha's thoughts had been focused on that thing. But no matter how curious she was, she didn't dare approach it. Her Instincts told her to be wary because it was created by the Shadow Monarch. She didn't want to risk getting into trouble by going near it for no reason. Arsha, who liked that this world was safer than the outside, had no intention of taking risks because of unnecessary curiosity. Moreover, she was busy trying to gain Suho's favor, and recently, even that dangerous 'dragon' hatched from its egg and roamed around this place.

"Beep?" Speak of the devil!

[Eek!]

Chomp!

Ragnar, the red lizard, who came waddling towards Arsha, suddenly opened his mouth wide and his long tongue shot out like a whip, wrapped around Arsha's body, and swallowed her whole.

Gulp!

[...Please!]

She was eaten... Again. Fortunately, her main body escaped and reappeared at a distance. She shuddered at the sight of Ragnar looking at her with a harmless expression and smacking his lips. It was then.

Whoosh—!

Ragnar's goofy expression suddenly became stern, and he smiled meaningfully at Arsha.

[Are you curious about that pillar?]

Shiver—!

The Dragon King Antares possessed the small and cute Ragnar's body. Arsha's eyes widened in fear, and she backed away.

[Ah, don't be scared. Ragnar won't grow from eating a few more bugs like you.]

'Those damn insects.' Antares just clicked his tongue at Arsha's pathetic appearance. But then he smiled meaningfully again, pointed at the black pillar she was just looking at, and asked,

[Answer my question. Are you curious about that pillar?]

[I... am not curious.]

[Lies are bad. They make me want to kill...]

1

[I-I'm curious!]

[Good. Good... That's how you should answer me.]

Arsha couldn't help but tell the truth as soon as she saw Antares' eyes gleaming with madness. She had no choice. Since ancient times... No, since the beginning of time, the dragon race had been the natural enemy of insects. There was no need to even mention the Dragon King, the Monarch of Destruction, Antares, right before her eyes. The dragons were those who devoured insects like snacks from the moment they were born. They were a vicious race that instinctively sucked all nearby bugs in as naturally as breathing air, even though insects couldn't even begin to fill their bottomless stomachs. So, for Arsha, Antares' presence was, in some ways, even more terrifying than Suho's.

[Isn't it strange that you're afraid of that black pillar yet can't take your eyes off it?]

[...Yes, it is.] Arsha confessed honestly as Antares saw through her heart.

The dragon's smile deepened. [If you're curious why, you can just go up there and see for yourself.]

[...I'm scared.]

[It's natural to feel fear. That pillar is... 'His' doing.] Antares clicked his tongue in displeasure as he thought of Sung Jinwoo. But what he really disliked were the numerous magical circles embedded in that pillar.

[Tsk. For the Shadow Monarch to imitate the magic of the demonic spirit shamans.]

'This is why we lost the war...' Antares didn't like the guy, even in retrospect.

The shadow power.

The fraudulent authority over death and the ability to command the dead! The King of the Dead, the first Shadow Monarch 'Ashborn', used that power to gather the enemies he defeated and gradually grew the 'Immortal Army'. He was a powerful being who could face several Monarchs alone with just that power alone.

But Sung Jinwoo, the second Shadow Monarch who inherited his legacy, was different. Was it an approach possible only because he was once a weak human? That guy didn't just use the Shadow Monarch's power to create an army like Ashborn. He mastered the abilities of the soldiers themselves, becoming worthy of being called a 'legion' by himself.

4

[For someone who didn't need to become any stronger to master such petty tricks. Humans are truly unfathomable.]

[Petty tricks...?]

[Can't you see the magic of the demonic spirits clinging to that pillar?]

[I can see that much. But I can't grasp its true nature...] Arsha answered cautiously so as not to offend Antares. She looked up at the black pillar on top of the pyramid again.

As they say, you see as much as you know. To some, it might just look like a black unfathomable ray rising high into the sky, but if you looked deeper into the abyss it was made of, you could see numerous magic circles intertwined within that darkness. That's why it was even more unsettling.

[I can't even imagine what purpose those densely packed magic circles are serving...]

[Tsk. You insignificant thing. It's absurd and pathetic that you're aiming to be Querehsha's successor.]

2

[Please... bestow your wisdom upon me, who is infinitely lacking. I will listen attentively.] Arsha completely discarded her pride despite Antares' openly mocking attitude. It was only natural to grovel before the strong. And for the weak, begging the strong for mercy wasn't something to be ashamed of.

[Hmm.]

Antares' expression softened a little, seemingly pleased with that attitude. He stroked his chin, turned his gaze back to the black pillar Sung Jinwoo created and left behind, and spoke,

[Since ancient times, the Demonic Spirits living in the magic world have been a race that crossed dimensions, playing petty tricks and mocking souls.]

The Demonic Spirits.

Shamans who enjoyed collecting numerous souls through dimensional cracks and conducting all sorts of wicked experiments and research. Especially the ability of their king and Monarch, Yogumunt, shone in the chase with the Shadow Monarch. Just the fact that he could escape the Shadow Monarch's sight when necessary and use that to gain a strategic advantage was enough to prove how great Yogumunt's magic was. But... The Shadow Monarch could teleport as well. Crossing dimensions through Gates was something 'He' could easily do.

[That's why we eventually lost. All the Demonic Spirits who followed Yogumunt at that time were completely absorbed into his army. And that's the result...]

The black pillar.

All kinds of magic were offered to Sung Jinwoo by the shamans of the magic world who were reduced to shadow demonic spirits. Among them, there were many spells that could be cast with just a bit of magic power... That pillar was the result of all those combined.

[So, what kind of magic is on that pillar...]

[Heh. Isn't it obvious? He always fights to protect everyone. That's his worst habit.]

War was about defeating the enemy and achieving victory, But Sung Jinwoo, that guy, valued protecting someone more than defeating the enemy, And that's why he was always alone.

[He isn't a king.] A king was a being who reigned. But a king who sacrificed himself to protect others? That kind of guy wasn't a king. At least not in Antares' eyes.

[...That's why I can't acknowledge him. And that pillar... is the insurance he prepared to protect everyone.]

Krrrr—!

Antares gritted his teeth as he glared at the black pillar soaring high into the sky.

[If you truly want to be Querehsha's successor, then risk your life and climb that pillar. If you succeed, you will achieve what you desire, and if you fail...]

Gulp. Arsha swallowed at Antares' words. His mad eyes continued to provoke her.



[Can you really challenge that path of darkness, risking the annihilation of your soul?]

Annihilation of the soul.

It was a terrifying phrase for Arsha, whose main body always hid and acted from the shadows. It was then...

[If that's the case, I'll try first.]

[Hmm?] Antares turned his head in surprise at the sudden low voice.

There sat Ammut, who had broken through the wall of the pyramid and was listening to their conversation. He looked up at the black pillar.

[I was also curious about that.]

As soon as he finished speaking, before Arsha could make up her mind, Ammut had already gotten up and jumped towards the top of the pyramid. His soul had been strengthened along with the pyramid when Sung Jinwoo's illusion visited. But he had only been staring at that black pillar, not knowing its true nature. A voice suddenly came to mind. The words of Sung Jinwoo's illusion that visited him before.

– Ammut, I've linked your soul trapped here with your real soul in the Sea of The Afterlife. You are just like me now.

– ...What does that mean?

– It means you can now become a shadow soldier whenever you want.

[I've been wanting to get out of this place for a long time.] Ammut's lips curled up.

The top of the pyramid. There a black pillar was rising vertically from its pointed center. That black ray of darkness pierced through the dimensional wall and stretched vertically towards the distant universe. He recalled the conversation he had with Sung Jinwoo's illusion when he created that ominous thing.

– What have you done!

– This is a kind of insurance. It has nothing to do with you, so don't worry about it.

[Does it really have nothing to do with me... I'll check that with my own body.]

Was what Sung Jinwoo said true, or was it a provocation? Ammut reached out his hand towards the black pillar without hesitation.

Flash—!

[W-wait for me!]

Arsha also hurriedly spread her wings and soared at that sight.

Flash—!

Antares, who was leisurely watching the two of them disappear into the darkness from below, chuckled and...

"...Beep?"

Ragnar who returned to his usual foolish expression burst into tears.

2

Beeeeee—!

He was hungry.

## **Solo Leveling: Ragnarok [FAN TL] Chapter 322 - Chapter 320**

### **Chapter 322: Chapter 320**

Suho was well aware of the strange phenomenon that occurred in the shadow dungeon after Sung Jinwoo's illusion visited. It would be strange for him not to notice. Ammut's pyramid suddenly increased in size, and Ammut, who lived inside, also grew larger. Additionally to top it off, an unknown black beam suddenly shot up from the top of the pyramid, piercing the sky. From Suho's perspective, it was impossible not to be concerned since those things were happening right in his shadow. At least the first two changes seemed to have a clear purpose: to help Suho train more effectively with Ammut. But he couldn't figure out the purpose of the black pillar.

"What is this? I can't even touch it."

Suho climbed on top of the pyramid and tried to touch the black pillar with his hand. But no matter how much he flailed his arms, his hand couldn't feel anything. Even though a huge pillar of energy was clearly visible, gushing out and piercing the sky right before his eyes. No matter how hard Suho tried, he couldn't touch the core of that energy. He summoned Beru and asked him about it, but the ant didn't give a proper answer. Beru didn't know either. All he could say was that the pillar seemed to be made of layers of demonic spirits' spells.

[Don't worry about it, my liege. The King must have done it for a reason.]

After hearing those words Suho eventually gave up on trying to figure out the purpose of the black pillar. He believed that his father's intention would eventually be revealed, and since this was his father's doing, it wasn't something he should worry about.

Additionally, he was busy.

Even with his filled schedule, he was still visiting Ammut every day and slowly going insane because of the terrible torture disguised as the Iron Body training. It was the result of the increased size of Ammut and the pyramid. But in the meantime...

There was someone who could recognize the purpose of this pillar from the beginning. It was Ragnar, always walking around with a foolish expression. The Dragon King, the Monarch of Destruction, Antares, was always watching the outside world through those innocent eyes. He, just like Sung Jinwoo, had been using countless demonic spirits as slaves for a long time. He even dragged around Yogumunt, the King of demonic spirits, the Monarch of Transfiguration, treating him like a mere subordinate, so in a way, he had been doing something similar to what the current Shadow Monarch did after winning the war. Therefore, it was natural for him to see the real identity of the black pillar. However he didn't feel obligated to tell Suho about it. Antares wasn't that kind, additionally there was nothing Suho could do even if he knew.

'...He'll find out when the time comes.'

And today, That 'time' had come.

Whooosh—

The black pillar.

Watching the backs of the Monarchs' successors jumping into that abyssal stream, Antares, hidden behind the innocent Ragnar, clicked his tongue with an indifferent expression, as if he hadn't been the one who instigated them.

[Tsk. If they can't endure and die, it just means they were That weak, right?]

It was a cold-hearted remark. He was the one who subtly pushed them, but in any case, it was their own choice... In the end, they were responsible for their own actions. Besides,

[I am not a benevolent and soft-hearted Monarch like Sung Jinwoo.]

Antares gritted his teeth as he thought of his nemesis. He was watching everything happening outside the shadow through Ragnar and Suho. That was why he pushed them at this exact time. It might have been a little early, but those who couldn't endure and died now would still perish even if they tried later. It didn't matter when the lives of the weak ended.

[If they're not up to par, I would have to find a replacement anyway.]

Taking care of runts, weak enough to be eliminated even before the war against the outer gods wasn't something that suited the Monarch of Destruction, Antares. He wasn't Sung Jinwoo. But...

1

[Tsk...]

Even though he felt a little cheated, it was true that he had been resurrected thanks to Sung Jinwoo. He owed his life to the person who killed him, and he even lives in his shadow world now... Although he had the excuse of helping his son in return, his life wasn't so cheap that he could be settled with just that.

[...I should earn my keep.]

No matter what anyone said, he was Antares. The great Dragon King, the Monarch of Destruction, Antares. It was ultimately a matter of pride.

[I really don't like this. Babysitting doesn't suit me.]

In the end, Antares clicked his tongue with a dissatisfied expression and sent a simple message to Suho, who was busy outside the shadow. Of course, it wasn't anything important. This much advice wouldn't change the result anyway.

[If they're going to die, they'll die.]

Ding!

[The Dragon King, the Monarch of Destruction...]

A single system message was delivered to Suho.

\* \* \*

At that time.

Rumble—!

Ammut and Arsha, sucked into the black pillar, were writhing in terrible pain. A tremendous pressure struck them the moment they entered this place!

Rumble—!

[Krrk...!]

[Kyaaaaaaaaaaaa...!]

Unlike Arsha, who was screaming incessantly beside him, Ammut gritted his teeth and managed to barely hold back his screams. He strained so much that blood was dripping from his clenched teeth. But that didn't lessen the pain. Rather, the pressure that tightened from all directions was mercilessly crushing and tearing their souls apart like an angry vortex.

'To think this place would be like this...!' He had prepared himself to some extent, but he couldn't have imagined that this kind of pain awaited him. This black stream, which was just an intangible shadow to Suho, was 'death' itself to others.

[Kyaaaaaaaaaaa...]

Arsha's screams beside him gradually grew faint. Ammut turned his head with effort and saw her disintegrating, unable to withstand the pressure. As the Dragon King warned, Arsha was on the verge of annihilation. And it wouldn't be just death, but the destruction of the soul!

Even Suho couldn't save her at this point.

Even the Shadow Monarch's power that defied death couldn't revive her.

Seeing that, Ammut recalled the words of Sung Jinwoo's illusion again.

– This is a kind of insurance. It has nothing to do with you, so don't worry about it.

One thing was certain. Those words were true. This black stream wasn't insurance for them. It must be insurance for his son, Sung Suho.

Rumble—!

Just like that, their souls were being mercilessly ground by the black stream that started from the top of the pyramid and swept upwards. Like vegetables in a blender.

[Aaaaa...] Arsha's screams, caught in that torrent, gradually faded like an echo.

Ammut finally gritted his teeth and reached out his hand.

Grab—!

He caught something at the edge of the abyss. It was a fragment of Arsha, on the verge of annihilation. Unlike Ammut, who was a dead soul from the beginning, Arsha was still a living being. That's why she was even more afraid. Why else would she readily pledge allegiance to Suho out of fear of death? But having experienced it firsthand, this black stream was a space that was even harder for living beings to endure.

[Krrk! Why did you follow me...!]

[Th-thank you...] Arsha's soul barely managed to answer Ammut's words. But the pain didn't disappear, and she was still stunned. It was then...

Kyaaaaa—!

[...?!]

Vicious fangs suddenly appeared from the endlessly surging black vortex.

'Sharks? Whales?'

Unknown monsters were swirling in the abyss, opening their mouths wide and trying to bite and devour Ammut and Arsha.

[Kyaaa...! B-be careful...!] Arsha, barely hanging onto Ammut's arm, screamed in fear. But before she could even finish her sentence, the attack began.

Chomp! Chomp!

Their existence was already on the verge of being scattered just from the terrifying pressure, and now unknown predators appeared.

[Krrk!]

But Ammut grinned, baring his teeth.

[This is perfect!]

Bang—!

'...?!'

His fist smashed the monster that approached right before his eyes and it popped like a balloon. Then he stepped on the corpse and kicked off. And grabbing the jaw of the monster above, he brutally slammed it down.

Kyaaa—!

The monster screamed as its body, from its forcibly opened mouth to its tail, was torn in half. Using the recoil from that attack, Ammut gained momentum and leaped upwards.

Crash! Bang! Crack—!

A gruesome scene of carnage began. Ammut continued to brutally tear apart the monsters that appeared in the torrent, And using their corpses as stepping stones, he climbed the endless black stream. It was by no means an easy process. Every time he killed one of the abyssal monsters, more injuries appeared on Ammut's body .

Arsha?

She was already spent. She didn't even have the time to regret following him here after hearing the Dragon King's warning. All she could do was focus, to keep her existence from disappearing. It was then...

[Ah...!]

An accident occurred. As Ammut gained momentum, Arsha, who was barely hanging onto his body, lost her grip. She was sucked into the violent storm of the abyss. Her soul was in danger of being completely shredded at any moment.

Whoosh—!

Ammut hurriedly extended his hand, and the mummy bandages covering his body stretched out, wrapping around Arsha's main body like a whip. But... even that was useless.

Rip—!

It wasn't a torrent that mere enchanted cloth could withstand. The mummy bandages were torn, and Arsha fell far from Ammut's reach. Far, far away...

At that moment, Instead of closing her eyes in fear, Arsha noticed Ammut's gaze looking at her. Only at the moment of her imminent annihilation did she finally realize her feelings for Ammut.

[I also...]

Ammut, relentlessly tearing apart the abyssal monsters and climbing upwards in this torrent, The strength he possessed was real. That power was so beautiful and dazzling in the eyes of Arsha, who was about to die without being able to do anything.

[I also wanted to be strong like you...]

An existence incomparably stronger than the queen bee who could do nothing but increase the number of her workers. Compared to herself, who only struggled out of fear of death, Ammut's figure, pursuing strength even in death, was so...

'...enviable.'

No, not just Ammut, but everyone else was enviable. Even that... 'guy', who only wagged his tail and ate, was much better than her...

[Grrrr!]

'...?!'

It was then. A welcome growl suddenly came from behind Arsha, who was swept away by the torrent.

Grab—!

[Y-you?!]

Arsha was startled and looked at the 'wolf' that had her in its mouth.

[Grrrr!]

[Gray?! When did you...!]

'Gray! It is Gray!' The last descendant of the King of Beasts, the Fang Monarch's lineage, had jumped into the black pillar belatedly.

'But why?' His form was much larger than usual.

Actually, while Suho was possessed by him and fought countless times, Gray was directly or indirectly participating in more battles than any other descendant. Always with his master... As a result, Gray, who was just a wolf cub at first, had achieved explosive growth.

Kyaaaaaaaaa—!

Gray howled. And he quickly took the fading Arsha from his mouth, put her on his back, and showed her how he got this far.

That unknown pressure dominating this space? It was pain applied to Ammut, Arsha, and Gray. But Gray had something special that they didn't...!

Chomp! Crack! Gulp!

[Grrrr!]

A true hunter always preyed on the weak. They devoured the weak and grew stronger. Gray was becoming stronger and stronger by eating the corpses of the countless abyssal monsters that Ammut tore apart here. Just like he always did. Just like when he was with Suho!



Kyaaaaaaaaa—!

[Heh...] Ammut chuckled looking at Gray, who was majestically roaring and following the black torrent.

'Who was it...? Suho? Or Antares?' He didn't think that stupid dog came here on his own. But it was truly exquisite timing. Thanks to that, they fortunately survived at the edge of the abyss.

Whoosh—!

And before them lay the place, they had to break through the vortex of the souls to reach...

There, the true 'death' awaited.

[...This is...?]

Whoosh—!

An endless expanse of the open darkness. A black sea filled by the bottomless abyss unfolded before their eyes.

*CREATORS' THOUGHTS*



Craftyprogamer

## **Solo Leveling: Ragnarok [FAN TL] Chapter 323 - Chapter 321**

### **Chapter 323: Chapter 321**

[Sea of The Afterlife]

A pitch-black expanse. Everyone was speechless at the sight of the overwhelming scenery.

— This is a kind of insurance. — Ammut finally understood what Sung Jinwoo meant by insurance, and who it was for.

A hollow laugh escaped him. [Hah! So it was a precaution in case your son couldn't find the Sea of The Afterlife on his own?]

'You truly are...'

- If you wish, you can now become a shadow soldier.
- It has nothing to do with you, so don't worry about it.

Sung Jinwoo's words came to mind one by one.

Debuff: 'Death'

The moment they entered the Sea of The Afterlife, the horrifying energy dominating this place started draining Arsha's and Gray's life force bit by bit.

Of course, Ammut was no exception. He was a being who became immortal through a contract with Kandiaru. A creature that could live forever, transcending its lifespan. However, only within that wretched pyramid, now called the Iron Body Training Ground! Ammut was a test subject created by The Great Spellcaster Kandiaru while researching the shadow power. He was in a similar state to the 'Demon King Baran' that Sung Jinwoo faced long ago, dead but not gone, a remnant of the soul. Therefore, the situation was a little different for him compared to Arsha and Gray, who were living beings. For Ammut, this Sea of The Afterlife was simply comfortable. It was so comfortable and languid that he was bewildered. A gentle feeling that this moment, floating in the black sea, would last forever... that his soul would completely melt into this abyssal darkness overwhelmed him...

[This is terrifying.] It was a truly fatal temptation. His 'soul', which had been resisting death for so long, was now longing for rest itself.

[So that's what he meant.]

Ammut gritted his teeth and forcibly resisted that sweet, languid temptation, recalling the expression of Sung Jinwoo's illusion when it appeared before him.

[...I can become a shadow soldier whenever I want.]

'What a devious bastard.' His 'death' was whispering to him. How wonderful it would be for the soul to be reborn as shadow soldiers. How fantastic! He was already looking forward to it!

[I'm simply amazed.]

Ammut was truly astonished. Sung Jinwoo. Even though he appeared as just an illusion without a shred of magic power, he... had he truly foreseen this far ahead in that short time and prepared for all this?

Smirk—

Ammut grinned and gritted his teeth at the thought of him.

[You're a sly one, Sung Jinwoo. You said it had nothing to do with me, and yet you played such a prank?]

What an absurd guy. Did Sung Jinwoo really think this far ahead that day? Did he know that he wouldn't listen to him and come here himself? There was no denying it when the choices were clearly laid out before him. Who was he! The strongest, the most vicious crocodile. The one who taught Tarnak, the King of Monstrous Humanoids and the Monarch of the Iron Body, the art of the Iron Body itself! But now... he was a mere ghost who died long ago, a remnant of a soul reduced to a slave bound by the magic of the demonic spirits. But the moment he arrived here, at the Sea of The Afterlife, Ammut was finally able to choose, with his own free will between 'two options'

'Obedience'

One was the quick and easy path. To comfortably melt into the seawater and wait to become Suho's shadow soldier. There was no sweeter choice than this. He would become an immortal soul and pursue endless strength forever.

'Humiliation'

The other option was problematic. The difficult and long path. Ammut couldn't help but laugh when he realized what that choice would mean.

[What a devious bastard. To make me choose between obedience and humiliation.]

Sung Jinwoo's intentions were outrageous. But he knew it was also a consideration for him, so he didn't feel too bad. And looking at the situation, it didn't seem like he needed to make a hasty decision.

[Ah, Lord Ammuttt...!]

[Krrrr! Kwng...!]

Hearing the screams beside him, Ammut turned his gaze towards them. Arsha and Gray were floundering in the black sea. Unlike him, those two were losing their life force in real time. This was the harsh Sea of The Afterlife, unforgiving to living beings.

[...I'll save those guys first and then decide.] Ammut decided to first evacuate the fools who followed him.

Grab! Grab!

Ammut's giant hands grabbed Arsha and Gray by the scruff of their necks. And as expected of the strongest crocodile, he skillfully began to swim through the black currents of the Sea of The Afterlife. But then, abyssal monsters, smelling the scent of life, rushed towards them...

Kyaaa—!

Kihihihi—!

[Out of my way.] He nonchalantly struck them.

BOOM—!

The black sea exploded. Rough waves rose on the calm, until now water. Everything that stood in his way was torn apart in that black vortex.

'Iron Body'

Although Ammut was torturing, no wait, 'training' Suho with Iron Body every day, The true purpose of the technique wasn't just strengthening the muscles. It was to endlessly break, shatter, and reconnect the body, eventually strengthening even the soul within.

That ignorant training method, which took the human saying 'A sound mind in a sound body' to the extreme, was the ultimate purpose of Iron Body. In that sense, Ammut here was closer to that unachievable goal than anyone in history.

[Get lost.]

BOOM—!

...No one could block his path. Not the residents of the gap who grew by devouring the scraps of souls, Nor the tenacious and vicious weeds of the afterlife.

Rumble—!

Just like that, Ammut was freely roaming the Sea of The Afterlife as if it were his own home. But...

[Krrrr...]

[Snifle...]

Ammut heard Gray's whimpering from his back and quickly scanned the surroundings. At this rate, it was all meaningless if he couldn't find a way to escape the debuff 'Death'. He had to find a safe place before these guys lost all their life force... But was there even such a place? And... even if there was, could he find it in this absurdly vast sea?

[Whimper...]

Gray's tail, which was always wagging energetically, gradually drooped. Arsha, who was much weaker, was even worse. Although the pain inside the black pillar on the way here

was much more severe, their souls were now naturally approaching 'death' without any suffering in this Sea of The Afterlife.

This was 'obedience.'

Kyaaaaa—!

And the more they neared death, the more fiercely the abyssal monsters flocked, opening their mouths wide like crocodiles. Daring to, before the strongest...

[Just hold on a little longer!]

Ammut pushed through all those beasts and quickly crossed the black seawater. Carrying the two dying burdens. As long as it takes to find something... Then, Arsha's weak voice reached his ears.

[Cold... You have to find a cold place...]

[I know. I'm looking.]

No matter how busy Suho was outside, he visited Ammut regularly because of the daily quest. So the fact that Sirka recently became the King of the Snow Folk, and thanks to that, the fact that a harsh winter had come to this sea where one couldn't find even a small island, let alone a place to step on, was naturally shared with Ammut.

So he had been struggling to find the cold wind that weakened the effect of the debuff 'Death'. Which in the end, meant that he had to find the World Tree alone in this vast sea of souls, this absurdly wide abyss. And as quickly as possible, before Arsha and Gray died...

Since it was such a daunting task, Ammut quickly moved forward, destroying everything that blocked his path. This was something no one could help him with. Even if Gray sniffed around, there was no scent, And even if Arsha squeezed her strength and created a few worker bees to scout...

Thud.

...Arsha's worker bees would just die instantly before the debuff 'Death'.

[I'm sorry. My worker bee died again...]

[Don't waste your energy on useless things.]

'How much time had passed?'

'How long had they wandered the Sea of The Afterlife?'

In a situation where hoping for a miracle was hopeless...

Whoosh.

'Is this an illusion?' A glimmer of hope emerged as a gentle breeze unexpectedly swept through.

[Krrk! Where did it come from?]

Ammut glared in the direction he thought the wind came from. But unfortunately, the 'coldness' they were desperately searching for wasn't there. However, something completely different appeared. Far away, at the end of the vast sea, he spotted a faint silhouette approaching them.

[...!]

The moment they saw that, Arsha and Gray, who were on the verge of death, gasped and their eyes regained focus. Ammut's lips also stretched into a wide grin.

[You're terribly slow, aren't you?]

There was no time to waste. Ammut swam towards 'them' with all his might. And that small silhouette quickly grew larger and closer.

[...Found them!]

[Waaaaaaaaaaa!] Cheers erupted.

Not from Ammut, but from the ones who found him. Their identity was none other than...

'The demons' fleet, their ships made out of elvenwood...' Having heard the news through Antares, they were searching every corner of the Sea of The Afterlife for Ammut and his party.

[They don't look good!]

[Pull them up quickly!]

Urgent shouts could be heard as the shadow spiders spread their webs like a net and pulled Ammut and his party up.

Splash—! Splash—!

In the meantime, the demons blocked the abyssal monsters' attacks.

[They've become quite strong.]

Ammut, seeing that, was slightly impressed. The demons were pathetically weak creatures when he first saw them... It was only natural. They were the remnants who survived after most of their brethren died in the war. Nevertheless they had become unrecognizably stronger while wandering the Sea of The Afterlife under Suho's command. And he could immediately tell why.

[Lady Arsha! Please have this!]

[Lord Gray! Quickly chew and swallow this leaf!]

It was the 'leaves of the World Tree'! The demons began to hurriedly feed them to Arsha and Gray, whose life force was almost depleted. The leaves of the World Tree were the main ingredient for the 'potions' that Suho bought from the shop.

2

Munch Munch!

It was only natural that Arsha's and Gray's eyes quickly regained vitality as they ate them. However, the quantity surprised him greatly,

[Suho said they found the World Tree...]

Ammut, sitting on the deck and watching the scene, laughed in disbelief. The demons were... holding a handful of those precious World Tree leaves.

[When did they...]

He was simply amazed, Ammut clearly remembered the demons' ship, setting off on the Sea of The Afterlife as a small raft made by roughly cutting Elvenwood, a temporary measure... It had now become such a huge warship. And there wasn't just one.

[Contact everyone! Tell them we found Ammut!]

[Gather around!]

[We're returning to the World Tree!]

The demon fleet, under the command of Esil, the King of Demons and Monarch of Gluttony, communicated through Blood Crystals and began to assemble. Their combined power was immense, even the gap's residents, who constantly observed the demons in the Sea of The Afterlife, and the weeds, which roamed the sea craving living beings, dared not approach the massive fleet. Any who recklessly drew near would be

devoured by the roots of the Elvenwoods that served as the ships' keels. And as all the fleet converged...

Flash—!

A giant Gate opened before them.

[All demons! Gather before me!]

Ammut grinned at the familiar voice from beyond.

'Skill, Hell's Army'

The King of Demons was here, and wherever the king went, was the demon world. They scattered to search the sea, but since they had already found their target, there was no need to cross this vast expanse on their way back.

Flash—!

All the demons' ships, carrying Ammut and his party, passed through the portal that the King of Demons personally created. And at that moment...

Whoosh—!

A harsh winter struck, the World Tree, covered in white frost, revealed its majestic form before them. The Sea of The Afterlife, which was considered a mere legend, The World Tree, which was said to exist somewhere... appeared before them so easily. And at its center, Esil Radiru, the King of Demons, the Monarch of Gluttony...

[Graaaaaaaaaaaaaaaah!]

[...!]

...Was engaged in a fierce battle against the giant snake that descended from the World Tree, Nidhogg with five heads! Seeing that, the demons ignited their fighting spirit.

[Nidhogg has appeared again!]

[The King is fighting!]

[Fire the magic cannons!]

[We'll make sure it never comes down again!]

Rumble—!



Yes... All the demons under the command of Esil found the World Tree. But that didn't mean they completely conquered it.

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

Graaaaaaaaaaaaaah!

Kyaaaaaaaa—!

Nidhög, who came down to the roots whenever it had the chance, lived here. Every time it moved its giant body, the leaves of the World Tree fluttered and fell, but... To collect those leaves and return safely, the demons had to avoid being eaten.

[Heh. Damn it. When did those weaklings become so...]

Ammut couldn't help but laugh at the sight. Looking at the demons who dared to fight against that absurdly huge abyssal monster, Nidhög. He couldn't help but feel... competitive.

[Damn it. My body itches when I see things like this.]

1

He finally had to admit it. The second option Sung Jinwoo's illusion presented to him. The difficult and long path. 'Humiliation' It definitely wasn't easy, but thanks to that Suho guy, it didn't take them long to get here...

[Alright! I'll gladly accept humiliation!]

Thud—!

He finally kicked off the deck and jumped high, towards Nidhög, who was fighting the demons. No... towards the Primordial Darkness, where the Iron Body Monarch's energy was strongly felt.

[Kyahahaha! How humiliating!]

Thud—!

The master of Iron Body, Ammut, struck the giant jaw of Nidhög, which possessed the Primordial Darkness.

5



Craftyprogamer

## **Solo Leveling: Ragnarok [FAN TL] Chapter 324 - Chapter 322**

### **Chapter 324: Chapter 322**

Let's rewind time just a little... to the moment the demons finally found the World Tree in the Sea of The Afterlife and reached the frozen area surrounding it.

1

[We found the World Tree!]

Surprisingly, it wasn't the demons who were most delighted but the Shadow Dwarves.

[Kuhahahaha! It's really real!]

[We really found the World Tree!]

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

3

They were delighted like children, cheering and shedding tears in front of the World Tree, sincerely thanking Sung Suho for allowing them to achieve such a great feat, even in death. But then...

[What?! No regrets even if you died now?! What weak nonsense are you spouting!]

[...!]

The most ambitious of the Shadow Dwarves, the one who built the Demon King's ship 'Alfheim', the greatest bearded dwarf, could no longer be satisfied with 'just' this. Perhaps it was because he had been exposed to such intense desires after death. His soul, now the embodiment of ambition, fumed with passion, mirroring his beard, which blazed with shadowy smoke.

[Are you really dwarves?!] He rebuked his kin with a heart full of anguish.

[If you've found the World Tree, shouldn't you be discussing what to make from it? Isn't that the way of a craftsman?!]

[...!]

His reprimand, like a lightning strike, shocked the Shadow Dwarves, who had been simply rejoicing, overwhelmed with emotion. Their beards, wavering with black steam, bristled in all directions, as if they had indeed been struck by lightning.

[...Th-that's right!]

[We were lacking!]

As expected, the dwarf who built the largest ship, Alfheim, was on a different level.

[We are blacksmiths!]

[Blacksmiths who conquered the Sea of The Afterlife!]

[Master craftsmen who used even the Elves' sacred tree as mere lumber!]

'Master craftsmen!'

That one phrase was enough to summarize all the hardships and great achievements they had experienced so far...!

Silence fell abruptly, the cheers and tears shed by the Shadow Dwarves ceased. The World Tree, a cosmic mystery previously known only through legends, now stood before them. What came next was obvious: with their entire bodies burning with passion, the Shadow Dwarves turned, glaring at the World Tree with identical grins.

[Alright, shall we begin?]

The endless branches, a true giant. What should they make with all this lumber? No one voiced it, but the moment they saw this enormous World Tree, they unanimously agreed.

[A fortress.]

[Let's build a fortress.]

[Let's establish our base here, centered around the World Tree!]

Woooooooooho!

No words were needed. The Shadow Dwarves instinctively grabbed their tools, united by a single goal. A plan? Why would they need one? They had worked together countless times before. They dispersed as if they were a hive mind, each fulfilling their roles in perfect unison.

[We have enough supplies!]

[Now that we've found the World Tree, we don't need to expand our fleet anymore!]

[Bring all the Elvenwood scraps!]

[Bring out all the weeds too!]

[We don't need to save materials anymore!]

Flawless teamwork. Loud voices echoed everywhere, creating a perfect harmony.

[Hey, demons! We'll need more materials! We're going to turn this World Tree into a giant harbor!]

The demons, without even having time to relish the joy of finding the World Tree, had to become the dwarves' errand boys once more.

Clang! Clang! Clang!

The construction was incredibly fast. There was a huge difference between aimlessly floating in the vast sea and establishing a base in one place. In no time, a harbor for the demons' ships was built around the World Tree, and a fortress to defend against the residents of the gap and the weeds was erected.

Then came the real work...

[How can we make it obvious for everybody that the fortress is well made?!]

[We must build it robustly, so we can proudly say we conquered the World Tree!]

[Keuheuh! I'll start construction from this side!]

[Kyaha! That's a good idea! Then I'll make a sturdy staircase here!]

[Wait! I'm already busy removing the bark from this part!]

[That's a great idea! We can cut the bark as much as we want without weakening the Tree!]

"...?"

In the midst of that frenzy, Esil simply stood there with a blank expression. What exactly were those dwarves doing to the World Tree...? But knowing their nature, she began to worry rather than question. They were a race that pursued extreme efficiency and never

made anything useless. And that meant... There was a reason to build a fortress here, quickly.

Swish!

Knowing that, Esil raised her head with a sharp gaze. A giant World Tree trunk, its end beyond her sight. Somewhere above...

"...Did it already notice us?" Esil's eyes flashed sharply. As the Demon King who inherited the Primordial Darkness through the succession ceremony, she could instinctively sense the gaze watching them from somewhere above.

"Gulp... Hurry." She swallowed hard and urged the dwarves along with all the demons helping them.

Rumble

Rumble

Rumble...

"Nidhögg is coming."

'Nidhögg, the serpent that gnaws at the roots of the World Tree'

The giant serpent, possessing five Primordial Darknesses, had fled to higher ground to escape the harsh winter created by Sirka. But there was something it could never give up, no matter how harsh the cold was. The 'roots'. It would never sit still and allow the vermin to occupy the roots of the World Tree.

"Hurry! Prepare all the magic cannons to stop it from coming down!"

The battle between Nidhögg, trying to come down to the roots, and the demons trying to stop it, had begun. But...

Graaaaaaargh!

[B-block it!]

From the start, it was too much for them. Of course, no matter how many creatures gathered, they stood no chance against Nidhögg. But the crisis was an opportunity. Adversity, after all, is a stepping stone for growth.

Kyaaaa!

Crunch! Crack!

As the giant serpent climbed down the tree trunk, many World Tree branches were broken, and World Tree leaves fluttered down from the sky. And the demon race, who ate them all, became stronger.

"Eat them all!" Said Esil, the Demon King, the Monarch of Gluttony.

"Eat and grow stronger!"

"For Radiru! For the revival of the demon race!"

Waaaaaaah!

Under Esil Radiru's blessing, all the demons rapidly grew stronger and desperately tried to stop Nidhögg. Just then... Suho contacted them.

\* \* \*

Thump! Boom!

The world shook.

Roar!

Splash!

The normally silent Sea of The Afterlife was willed with roars.

Rumble! Rumble! Rumble...

The shockwaves continued to shake even the roots of the World Tree. As an absurd battle was unfolding around it.

Graaaaaaaaaaaaaaaah!

Nidhögg roared and grabbed the World Tree trunk with its thick tail, then it opened its five jaws unleashing fierce attacks everywhere.

Kaaaaaaaaah!

Powerful breath spewed out and split the dark sea. The black waves surged from the shockwave, and the abyssal monsters wandering below screamed.

Crunch!

Nidhög's struggle was a disaster in itself. Every time it moved, World Tree branches were shattered, and World Tree leaves scattered in all directions. But most of those leaves were sucked into Nidhög's mouth, only filling its belly.

[Kyahahahaha! Good! Good!]

Throughout the battle against the ferocious Nidhög, Ammut couldn't stop laughing. Has his blood ever boiled this much in his entire life? The battle against this ridiculously powerful abyssal monster was so delightful... Of course, his power didn't overwhelm Nidhög. He didn't even think about winning. He was just enjoying himself like an innocent child, fighting with all his might as if this was a fun game.

'I was strong from the moment I was born.'

Crocors, the strongest race among the monstrous humanoids. To the crocor, 'strength' was like air. They had no natural enemies, and they were a battle race born 'strong' from the moment they came to this world, unable to be threatened by anyone. If the crocor had high fertility, the power structure of the monarchs and rulers might have been greatly different. But the 'Absolute Being' who created them all would never allow that. What the Absolute Being wanted was not the end of war, but the eternal continuation of war. So, the crocor, born so strong, had an innate weakness... 'growth'. They were born strong, so they didn't need to become stronger. No, no matter how hard they tried, they couldn't become stronger. Growth? To crocor, that word was a weakling's expression. A process where weaklings struggled to survive. A process where they barely managed to become a little stronger. If that pathetic situation was called 'growth', the word had a completely different meaning to crocor. For them, born strong, growth meant aging. In other words, gradually weakening and dying. Even the great crocor had lifespans. To them, growing meant getting closer to death.

One day, Ammut began to observe the 'growing' weaklings. It was just a coincidence. Since he was from a race that couldn't become any stronger, he was simply curious about the fact that the weaklings were gradually becoming more powerful. So, wondering how strong they could become he tried to torment them a little. And their growth accelerated slightly. That was surprisingly fun, so he tormented them even more. As the weakling grew stronger, he brought an even stronger opponent and made them fight. It was a game at first, but then it became an experiment. And after countless tests...

'I envy them.'

He truly became envious of them. He felt jealous of the weaklings who struggled to become stronger. It was an absurd emotion, even thinking about it now. For a crocor, born as the strongest, to envy the weak? But what could he do? He didn't have anyone to fight against with all his might. And even if he fought with all he had, his race couldn't become any stronger anyway. That was the penalty the Absolute Being imposed on the crocors. So Ammut had never fought with all his might in his life.

...In short, Ammut had never experienced anything like this before.

Graaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaah!

To fight an enemy he couldn't defeat even with all his might! That's why Ammut just laughed, even as he was thrown back by the creature's struggle.

[Kyahahahaha!]

Pain? What did that matter? He was just thrilled! To face an enemy that wouldn't break no matter how much he attacked. How could there be a more exhilarating moment than this?! And...

[Are you there?] Ammut's smile widened.

He glared at the giant jaw of Nidhögg that lunged at him again, No, towards the familiar presence he felt within. Beyond that was his former disciple, the weakest being he had ever met.

'Tarnak'

The Primordial Darkness left behind by the King of Monstrous Humanoids and the Monarch of the Iron Body, was staring at Ammut from within Nidhögg's mouth. He felt a sense of 'humiliation' from that gaze.

[How dare you, a mere pawn, try to judge me?]

Of course, he knew that Tarnak was dead. That was just the darkness he left behind, no, the darkness he possessed. But... He felt awful.

[Come out. I'll crush you once again after all this time!]

Whoosh—!

As soon as he finished speaking, darkness suddenly engulfed Ammut. And a human figure appeared from the edge of that darkness looking down at him with an arrogant gaze.

[...Heh.]

Ammut charged at the creature, much like the countless insects that had once risked their lives to attack him.

*CREATORS' THOUGHTS*





## **Solo Leveling: Ragnarok [FAN TL] Chapter 325 - Chapter 323**

### **Chapter 325: Chapter 323**

'Oh my god.'

Esil, the rightful heir to the Monarch of White Flames and leader of the demon race, was doing her best to hold back Nidhögg, who possessed five Primordial Darkesses. To face such a foe, she used every means available: a sturdy fortress and defensive walls built by the Shadow Dwarves, covering fire from strategically placed magic cannons, and even the webs of Shadow Spiders. The sight of numerous demons bravely fighting Nidhögg with such perfect support was spectacular, yet all this effort only allowed Esil to face one of Nidhögg's heads in a one-on-one battle. That's why she was so shocked and terrified to see Ammut fighting Nidhögg alone.

'He's on a different level. Incomparable to someone like me.' Looking back, Esil's succession ceremony was the worst.

– You... are weak. – Whispered a voice filled with mocking laughter.

– ...?!

– You are not qualified.

Even now, Esil shuddered recalling the words she heard when she first attempted the succession ceremony. She was the only demon noble in the entire dimension who survived the war and its aftermath. She was qualified. No... she thought she was qualified, but she wasn't. Even though there were no other candidates in this universe.

Esil was lacking, her vessel insufficient to contain the Primordial Darkness. Therefore, she wasn't able to inherit the power, and was almost devoured by the darkness. If Suho didn't help her... If he hadn't fought alongside her as the priest...

'...I wouldn't be here now.'

Gulp.

Esil fully accepted that fact, she was keenly aware of her own shortcomings. But Ammut was different: Succession ceremony...?

Priest...?

He didn't know nor care about such things.

[Kyahahahaha!]

Thud—!

Crash—!

Ammut was fighting Nidhögg head-on with his own strength. However the monstrous serpent seemed unfazed by the continuous attacks. Nidhögg, after all, was like a natural disaster, a being beyond the capabilities of a mere creature to affect. Yet, Ammut seemed unconcerned, instead burning with competitive spirit and enjoying the fight, a pure clash of strength against strength. At the end of this intense tug-of-war, Ammut leaped into Nidhögg's mouth, but he displayed no desire or ambition to inherit the Primordial Darkness, which was unsurprising.

'...That's not a succession ceremony.' Esil swallowed.

'He doesn't need a reason to fight....' If she tried to find a reason for Ammut's actions, it was simply that an enemy had appeared before him. That alone was sufficient motivation for him to jump towards Nidhögg, towards the Primordial Darkness, purely for the sake of the fight, even laughing cheerfully as he did so. And at that moment...

5

Thud—!

One of Nidhögg's heads, the one that swallowed Ammut, suddenly stopped moving. Even against his will the 'succession ceremony' had begun.

'A succession ceremony without a priest...!' Esil was dumbfounded by the unimaginable situation, but she didn't forget her duty as the Monarch. Thanks to Ammut, the number of Nidhogg's heads they had to block was reduced from five to four, it was an opportunity she couldn't afford to miss.

"Listen, everyone!" Esil Radiru, the King of Demons, ordered all her forces.

"Hold on with all your might until Ammut returns!" She was already looking forward to it. To the moment when Ammut finished the succession and returned safely. If that was even possible without a priest.

"If we endure until the end, victory is ours!"

Ooooooooooh—!

A fierce battle continued accompanied by everyone's courageous shouts.

\* \* \*

However the real problem was somewhere else.

[Grrrr! Auoooo!]

Gray, carrying Arsha on his back while running around, found himself in a series of dangerous situations. While the platforms prepared by the dwarves provided ample places to run away to, some time ago one of Nidhogg's heads began targeting only Gray, ignoring all other attacks. Even taking direct hits from the magic cannons firing from all directions in its single-minded pursuit to devour him. It seemed to have realized that Gray was the most delectable prey here.

[Krrrrrr!]

Gray, quickly moving to the side, roared and clawed at Nidhögg's body.

Slash—!

The wind infused slash successfully hit, and scratches appeared on Nidhögg's hard scales.

[The attack worked!] Shouted Arsha, clinging to Gray's fur.

Despite his current appearance, Gray was of the King of Beasts', the Fang Monarch's descendant, and his chosen successor. This was the reason Nidhogg fixated on him, drooling. However, unlike with Ammut, it didn't seem intent on swallowing Gray whole

[He's trying to bite and gnaw us to death!] Arsha realized Nidhögg's intention.

[That's the only way we can become his nutrients! If it swallows us whole like it did with Ammut, a succession ceremony will begin!]

[Grrrr!] Gray growled as if he understood. And as if imitating Ammut, he glared at the creature's mouth.

[No!]

[Grr?]

[Please wait... At least until Suho arrives! We need a priest for the succession ceremony!] Gray, who seemed like he was about to charge, twisted his body dodging Nidhögg at Arsha's firm words. And he attacked at the same time.

Slash—!

Graaaaaaaaaaaaaah—!

The serpent struggled even more fiercely, and the fortress the dwarves built began to collapse.

[Repair it now!]

[It's a competition to see who's faster!]

The Shadow Dwarves rode on the Shadow Spiders and repaired the destroyed parts in a flash.

Graaaaaaaaaaaaaah—!

Thud—!

[Keureuk?!] Gray's body was thrown to the other side from Nidhögg's thrashing.

Crack—!

Fortunately, he barely managed to dig his claws into the dwarves' defensive wall and hold on. But the problem was the head that appeared behind him. The creature's other mouth opened wide like that of a crocodile.

Dash—!

Gray desperately escaped from that spot, but Arsha...

[...Ah.]

When Gray's body collided with Nidhögg, she lost her grip on his fur, which she was desperately holding onto. Fortunately, Arsha had wings and immediately flew up, but...

2

A bee's flapping wasn't enough to escape Nidhögg's range.

Kyaaaaa—!

[...!]

At that moment, Arsha spotted it. Inside Nidhögg's giant maw filling her vision, the Primordial Darkness was licking its lips at her. The moment she saw that, her survival instinct began screaming.

'I... am not qualified.' An immense despair washed over Arsha.

'Unqualified.'

Not everyone could claim the power just because they claimed to be the successor of a Monarch. Even if she somehow managed to reach the Primordial Darkness, it wasn't a power that one could obtain just by reaching it. Arsha's heart crumbled and she felt even more miserable because of that.

'I see. I wasn't qualified from the beginning.' She knew her own weakness. The title "Queen Bee" only impressed the worker bees; a frog venturing out of its well would be consumed by its natural predator, by a darkness even blacker than the well itself. Arsha, who had advised Gray not to be eaten without a priest, now clearly understood her own precarious situation.

'Even with a priest... I wasn't a vessel capable of inheriting the Primordial Darkness in the first place.'

Kyaaaaaaaaa—

Nidhögg's wide-open jaw closed, dyeing Arsha's vision black. The vast abyss within swallowed her whole.

'Yes, I...' Even at that moment, Arsha only despaired.

'Am just a bug.' That's right. She was just a bug, a flying insect that couldn't even struggle before the giant snake. And a bug that wasn't qualified to survive could only...

'Become someone's prey...' She had no right to refuse. Arsha knew that better than anyone, having lived in that ruthless ecosystem. She calmly accepted her death.

Chomp—!

Just like that, the darkness swallowed Arsha...

"Not so fast."

...Grab—!

[...?!]

At that moment, a strong hand suddenly appeared from behind and grabbed Arsha by the scruff of her neck.

Bang—!

Nidhogg's mouth closed right before her eyes, but it failed to devour Arsha! Belatedly realizing she was still alive, Arsha turned around in surprise, and what she saw behind her was a startling sight...

Flash—!

A small Gate had formed in the air, and a human arm was reaching out from the dimensional gap! Then, with a whoosh, the Gate expanded, and its owner, Suho, stepped through completely.

[S-Suho?!]

"Why are you spacing out? You're usually good at running away." Suho, who saved Arsha by a hair's breadth, chuckled and said,

"A bug should struggle to survive like a... bug." Then he glared at Nidhögg and smirked. He placed the tiny Arsha on his shoulder and sneered,

"Did I take too long? The priest has arrived."

Graaaaaaaaaaaaaaaah—!

Nidhögg, recognizing Suho, roared fiercely. The vicious killing intent struck him, but that didn't make him back down.

"You're asking why I was late...?"

...?

"I was a bit busy. For... various reasons."

Flash—!

Suho didn't come alone. The Gate he came through grew larger, and numerous 'ice elves' walked out. They were Sirka's friends who lived in the Sanctuary of Frost. Countless young elves, led by Sirka, came to this place.

"I thought you didn't like the cold, yet you came here."

Whoosh—!

At that moment, all the ice elves shot their arrows without hesitation.

Towards Nidhögg.

SWOOSH—!

A rain of projectiles, imbued with ice spirits, began to pour down on the beast. And at the center of it all, stood the King of the Snow Folk, the Nightmare Monarch, Sirka.

[Freeze. This is the Sanctuary of Frost!]

Graaaaaaaagh...!

Sirka, who literally became the nightmare of the World Tree, was also a nightmare to Nidhögg. Sirka's Ice Tree Spear extended with a crack and pierced its jaw.

"Good, in the meantime let's start the succession ceremony."

[Suho, I...] Arsha spoke in a gloomy voice at Suho's words,

"Ah, not you. Gray."

[...]

'Ah, as expected.' It wasn't a surprise; Gray had even lunged bravely at Nidhogg in Suho's absence. At his casual reply, Arsha, with a sullen expression, closed her mouth and settled onto his shoulder. She could do nothing else, having already realized her own predicament.

'The Queen of Insects, the Plague Monarch, Querehsha' All the words and actions, claiming to inherit her darkness, were nothing but shame and regret. But then...

"So, Arsha."

Grab

Suho picked up Arsha, who had become incredibly small, with his finger.

"Let's evolve you first."

[...Excuse me?]

He looked into Arsha's eyes and said, "Thanks to your worker bees' hard work, we've gathered quite a lot of materials from all over the world. I was a little late because I was busy gathering them and making something with Harmakan."

[...?] Arsha was dumbfounded at Suho's words.

'Worker bees?' What was it that he had her worker bees do outside? To spread all over the world and gather Elvenwood pollen? And what did he make with that?

'Ah, come to think of it...' While they struggled after jumping into the black pyramid's pillar, wandering aimlessly through the Sea of The Afterlife where day and night were indistinguishable, how much time had actually passed outside?

[S-Suho? What exactly is g...?] Arsha stammered at the sight of a woman standing beside Suho.

'Test Subject No. 47'

That woman's appearance definitely resembled the best toy created by the Apostle of Evolution, which had crumbled and disappeared.

"Thank your worker bees later. They gathered all the scattered cells for you."

[...Excuse me?]

'What did that mean?'

'For whom?'

'What did they gather?'

A beautiful woman with soulless, unfocused eyes. That appearance was very similar to the form she usually transformed into when imitating humans. But for Arsha, who still couldn't understand what was going on, Suho explained with a meaningful smile.

"Avatar No. 1. That's what I named her for now."

[D-don't tell me...?]

"Yes. It's a new vessel to contain your soul."

1

*CREATORS' THOUGHTS*



Craftyprogamer

## **Solo Leveling: Ragnarok [FAN TL] Chapter 326 - Chapter 324**

### **Chapter 326: Chapter 324**



As Suho said, he had been incredibly busy lately. No, everyone related to him was busy. While Ammut's group was being sucked into the Sea of Afterlife, a lot was happening outside as well.

Bzzzzzzzz!

Arsha's worker bees were flying across the battlefields where Elvenwoods and hunters from all over the world were fiercely fighting, clutching the pollen fluttering in the air with their three pairs of legs, faithfully carrying out the last command left by the Queen Bee.

"Gather Elvenwood pollen for Lord Sung Suho."

That command was still in effect even though the Queen Bee was gone. Thanks to that, pollen collected by bees from all over the world was being continuously delivered to Suho. However, he had to keep managing all that pollen flow which took a lot of time...

Bzzzzzzzz-Bzzzzzzzz!

On the rooftop of Ahjin Soft's headquarters numerous worker bees were swirling around Suho, having traveled across the dimensional walls from around the globe. Of course, Harmakan had to put in an immense amount of labor for this to be possible. He had to open and close countless tiny Gates, barely the size of fingernails, to allow the worker bees to cover vast distances. Even if the dimensional holes were small, controlling such a large quantity of them was an extremely cumbersome and mentally taxing task. Still, as Harmakan got more and more involved, the speed at which pollen gathered in Suho's hands increased tremendously. However, just gathering a lot of pollen didn't amount to much. No matter how good at magic Harmakan was, he couldn't replace the role of the Apostle of Evolution. This was where Beru played his part.

[Kieek! No need for more research! We can start mass-production based on the scattered cells of the test subject No. 47] Beru actively utilized the knowledge of the Apostle of Evolution whose brain he had devoured to complement Harmakan's magic.

4

[The basic framework is simpler than I thought.] Harmakan's eyes gleamed darkly at Beru's advice. New knowledge always excited the Demonic spirits. The cells created by the Apostle of Evolution were already an almost complete project, with the only absolute limitation being the inability to create a "soul." That's why it was a failure. But for Suho, that limitation made things even easier.

"We don't need to create a soul, and there's no reason to. We just need to increase the quantity of cells as they are now."

[In other words, recycling subject No. 47. I understand perfectly.] Harmakan nodded at Suho's command and supplemented the magic circle. And with Beru's help...

[There are some differences, but mass-producing something similar to No. 47 has become possible.]

Actually it was even easier than producing subject No. 47. What they needed to create for the "Solo Leveling: Ragnarok" project was simply avatars, puppets that could temporarily hold human souls. They didn't need egos like the one No. 47 had.

6

Smirk.

"This is enough."

Ironically, all the test subjects that the Apostle of Evolution considered failures were perfect for Suho's plan. Harmakan's job was to copy those cells as a basic template and mass-produce something similar using the pollen collected by the worker bees as material. If this project succeeded, all of humanity would be able to enter immortal bodies and fight against the enemies from the outer universe as combatants.

3

[However, there is one problem.] Harmakan informed with a serious expression.

The challenge was quite serious. Getting human souls to inhabit the immortal avatars was easy. The real question was whether they would be effective combatants in the war against the Outer Gods. That was the issue. Despite the fact that they revived and healed like shadow soldiers, if their basic combat power was low, they wouldn't be of any help in the war.

[My lord, how do you plan to solve that problem?] Suho answered Harmakan's question with a meaningful smile.

[Kieek! As expected of my young lord! Even a worm has its own tricks!] Beru was truly moved by that attitude, even shedding tears.

2

"...Was that a compliment?"

1

[Of course! A 'special' compliment!]

"..."

Suho just chuckled at the praise. After witnessing his overwhelming battle against Nidhögg recently, all the taunts, no... 'encouragements', Beru had given him about being as weak as an 'ant larva' gained credibility. Seeing was believing after all... That day, he showed the true power of a Marshall rank shadow soldier, a close aide to his father. Thanks to that, Suho couldn't help but be humble.

'...I still have a long way to go.' No matter how strong he became, there was always a 'bigger fish'. Now, Suho's power had transcended human limits. But that wasn't his goal, the real enemies weren't other humans, but invaders from outer space. To face them...

3

'I won't hesitate to use any means necessary. That's what war is.' Suho's eyes, gazing at the distant universe where his father was, were filled with determination. At that moment...

"Suho." Just in time, his uncle, Yoo Jinho, approached Suho, who was still receiving pollen from the worker bees on the rooftop of Ahjin Soft.

Bzzzzzzzz! Bzzzzzzzz! Bzzzzzzzz!

There were so many worker bees swirling around him that Yoo Jinho had to approach cautiously. Looking slightly tired, he delivered the message.

"We've modified the game capsule according to your plan. As soon as we check the prototype's performance and stability, we can start mass production."

"That was faster than I expected."

"It's all thanks to Harmakan. Maybe it's because the Demonic Spirits were involved in the capsule's design from the very beginning, but he finished it quickly with just a few tweaks. Nevertheless I think the avatars are more important than the capsules... Do you think it will work out?"

"We just finished our prototype too." Before Suho stood "No. 47", thanks to the efforts of the worker bees, it was restored to its beautiful female shape, from before its creator's passing. But as it lacked a soul and ego, its eyes were lifeless. Yoo Jinho, who discovered it late due to the swirling swarm of bees, asked.

"You're saying you're going to put a soul into that avatar? Who is the first test subject?"

"I have just the right person." Suho smiled meaningfully. In the distant past, in a timeline that had been forgotten, there were beings on Earth who had taken over human bodies and acted through them: The Rulers and the Monarchs.

The Monarchs completely devoured human souls and took over their bodies to act on Earth, while the Rulers silently lent their power while maintaining the human soul. Suho, who had heard all his father's stories about that time from Beru, had a grand plan based on all those events and abilities...

\* \* \*

"If it's entering a soulless body, the Monarch's ability is the perfect fit."

[...]

Arsha, who was chosen as Suho's test subject, could only widen her eyes in shock. She, merely a flying insect, had been disguising herself as a human all this time to blend in with the people of Earth. Perhaps because the disguise had become a habit, she was maintaining her human form even at this moment, dying in the Sea of Afterlife, but even that was becoming difficult now... However, just as her disguise was naturally wearing out Suho had brought her a new vessel.

"Come on in. It's a hive your worker bees made for you."

Rumble!

"Ahh, one more thing before that, I know we don't have time for leisurely conversations, so let's get straight to the point."

Even at this moment, a fierce battle was unfolding above their heads. The Ice Elves were blocking Nidhögg causing a massive commotion, with ice arrows. Of course, from Nidhögg's perspective, those attacks were harmless, but if their true purpose was to inflict a "debuff", it was a perfect method. First, the frost froze Nidhögg's eyelids, obstructing his vision, then his movements were visibly slowed down by the cold. In this slightly calmer moment, Suho picked up Arsha and brought her to No. 47.

"Of course, entering this avatar won't suddenly make you stronger."

[I know. I'm already at my limit...]

Arsha understood Suho's words perfectly. As he put it, this vessel was just a hive. If anything, a proper Monarch would become weaker when trapped in this body, just as it happened when they took over humans in the past. Of course, No. 47's body was a masterpiece far beyond that of ordinary people's. After all, it was the best vessel the Apostle of Evolution was able to create. But even so, entering this "hive" wouldn't make her stronger. Harmakan, who had restored this avatar, was worried about that very issue. Even if human souls entered the avatars: Would they be effective against the invaders from outer space. Although they changed vessels, the innate limitations were clear. However Suho had considered all those factors and made the offer to Arsha.

"That's why you'll need this."

[...]

Arsha's body trembled as if struck by lightning at the sight of the object Suho suddenly held out.

[Item: Seed of Evolution]

[Acquisition Difficulty: ??]

[Type: Consumable]

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

It was the very core left behind upon the Apostle level entity's death. It was an item created by Beru by condensing the energy of the Apostle of Evolution that was scattering after he was defeated and killed. However even Beru himself didn't know the purpose of this seed. It was a true wildcard. Although, as he had definitely removed all the energy of Itarim in the process, it wouldn't have any harmful effects on Suho.

[S-Suho...! How can you use such a precious item on a lowly creature like me...!] When Suho handed her the Seed of Evolution, Arsha desperately refused. This wasn't right, no matter how touched by the action she was!

[I can't accept it! You should use this yourself...!] Suho should be the one to use this precious item! As the name 'Seed of Evolution' suggested, it could 'evolve' his power in some way, so it didn't make sense for her, a mere flying insect, to take advantage of it!

"No, I don't need it." Suho firmly shook his head.

He already knew... The ultimate form that the Apostle of Evolution envisioned was the 'Shadow Monarch', so what was the point of Suho, his son, using this? Besides...

"I don't want to taint the soul I inherited from my father with something suspicious like this."

1

[What commendable words!] Beru, who appeared beside Suho, nodded in satisfaction. Then he gave some advice based on the memories of the Apostle of Evolution whom he devoured.

[Since it's the energy left behind by the Apostle of Evolution, it's most effective when used on the test subject he left behind! So... Shut up and eat it!]

2

"Yes, take what is given to you. But in return you need to swear your allegiance to me with your soul."

[I... I pledge my loyalty!] At that moment...

Ding!

[Obtained Pet: 'Queen Bee Lv. 99'.]

5

The pet system activated, just like with Gray and Ragnar, it was the proof that Arsha's oath was sincere.

"Your level is this high...? You must have reached your limit as a Queen Bee." Suho had a surprised expression, learning that Arsha's power was greater than he thought. But those words also meant that no matter how high her level was, it was impossible to overcome the limitations of her race. In other words, it was time for evolution.

"Now eat it."

1

[Yes...!]

Arsha unhesitatingly accepted the Seed of Evolution that Suho held out. And she moved into the empty body of No. 47, still standing there soulless. At that moment...

Flash—!

A strong light erupted from No. 47's body.

Crackle— Crack! Crack—!

No. 47's body couldn't withstand that light and cracked, but it quickly recovered thanks to its unique characteristics, then it cracked again... After repeating that cycle countless times.

Flash—!

'Arsha' opened her eyes.

Ding!

[‘Pet: Queen Bee Lv. 99’ evolves into ‘Void Insect Lv. 1’.]

2

"Void?" Suho blinked.

Was it thanks to the efforts of the countless worker bees who crossed the dimensional gap to gather all those cells? Or was that the direction of evolution Arsha desired, just like the Apostle of Evolution evolved into the Nightmare Apostle? He soon found out the reason...

Exhale...

A refreshing sigh escaped Arsha's lips as she opened her eyes in No. 47's body. And she smiled at Suho with an alluring gaze. It was a bewitching smile that reminded him of the time he first met Arsha, but unlike then, her eyes were filled with honey-like loyalty.

1

[Thank you, Lord Sung Suho. My master.]

1

"You still seem a bit weak."

[Yes. I'm still lacking. But my evolution has just begun.] Arsha's gaze subtly shifted upwards.

Nidhogg struggled violently against the ice elves, but Arsha's gaze was fixed far above, not on the serpent, but on the leaves of the World Tree scattering due to its fierce struggle, and specifically, on the tiny pollen of the World Tree, visible only to the worker bees.

[Gather, my worker bees.]

Whoosh—!

Upon Arsha's command, small void gates opened around her, similar to the dimensional gaps created by Harmakan for the worker bees. The moment the worker bees, scattered across the globe, crossed over to the Sea of Afterlife through these holes, they all evolved into Void Insects, receiving Arsha's energy.

Bzzzzzz—

The Void Insects began to gather like a swarm of bees at Arsha's command.

[Master, please give me your orders.] Arsha waited for orders, her eyes locked with Suho's.

He chuckled at her confident expression and muttered, "As expected, you're quick-witted..."

Having been trying to get in his good graces all this time. Arsha already knew what Suho would order her to do. All that remained was his permission.

"I allow it. Do what you do best."

Even after evolving, Arsha was still too weak to inherit the Primordial Darkness. But the way to become stronger was always the same. To grow and multiply. Suho raised an arm, pointing towards the sky, his index finger directed at the World Tree. Then, his command fell.

1

"Build a hive on the World Tree."

1

[As you command!]

Bzzzzzz—!

At that moment, the Void Insects soared, ignoring the giant Nidhögg, they flew straight towards the World Tree. To build a hive on this cradle of the universe, on the center of the Sea of Afterlife.

*CREATORS' THOUGHTS*



Craftyprogamer

## **Solo Leveling: Ragnarok [FAN TL] Chapter 327 - Chapter 325**

### **Chapter 327: Chapter 325**

Arsha's evolution didn't just mean an increase in power. It was an 'advancement' of species. And with that, she somehow gained the ability to traverse the dimensional gap. It was unprecedented, only beings with powers comparable to Monarchs, or races specialized in magic like the Demonic Spirits, could freely enter and exit Gates. But Arsha had now become the queen of insects, freely moving through dimensional gaps



with thousands, no... tens of thousands of worker bees. Of course, this didn't mean she suddenly became stronger. Even if the Void Insects clung to Nidhögg and attacked with all their might, they couldn't inflict any damage. However, the continuous offensive of their near-infinite numbers was enough to exhaust Nidhögg even without suffering any injuries,

Whoosh!

The sight of tens of thousands of Void Insects soaring towards the World Tree at Arsha's command was as magnificent as watching the Milky Way. A spectacle of sparkling starlight flowing against the abyss of the universe. Even the Ice Elves, witnessing this beautiful spectacle, momentarily paused their battle and looked up. Nidhögg, also perplexed by the situation, looked around and opened its mouth. However, the Void Insects were so small that there was no way to deal with them individually.

1

Krrraaaaang!

An ominous energy erupted from Nidhögg's mouth. The powerful attack tore a hole in the sparkling lightshow of the Void Insects. But that was all, hundreds of Void Insects were instantly annihilated. So what? there were many, many more.

Bzzzzzzzz!

And as if nothing had happened the remaining Void Insects split into dozens of streams, quickly passing by Nidhögg's side, then they merged again, heading straight for the branches of the World Tree.

[Try to stop me if you can. There are plenty of worker bees.] Amidst them, Arsha gave Nidhögg an alluring smile. And with a flick of her finger, she directed the Void Insects that had passed Nidhögg.

[This seems like a good spot for the hive.]

Thanks to the Ice Elves, it was confirmed that Nidhögg, much like his appearance suggested, was not that different from a snake in its basic habits, a cold-blooded animal that couldn't maintain its body temperature on its own. The location of the hive was set among the branches where the most frost had accumulated, a place Nidhögg would dislike approaching.

Bzzzzzzzzz!

As soon as Arsha designated a suitable location, the Void Insects swarmed there and began to secrete mucus from their mouths.

'Beeswax.'

It is the primary material for beehives, originally produced by bees after consuming honey. They manipulate beeswax into hexagonal structure to create cells for the hive, which then hardens into a solid structure upon contact with air. However, the beeswax that the Void Insects, evolved from worker bees, started to spew was a bit more special. It was a very special substance produced in their bodies from the pollen of Elvenwood, gathered all over the world, the pollen of the World Tree, collected from around it, and the sap sucked from the World Tree. The moment that beeswax came into contact with the deathly air of the Sea of Afterlife...

[Pet: 'Arsha' is creating '??'.]

Something even the system couldn't identify began to be made at an incredible speed.

Crunch! Crunch!

Given the number of worker bees, the production speed was tremendous, so the hive was growing rapidly, larger, and larger and larger.

[Pet: 'Arsha's' level has increased.]

[Pet: 'Arsha's' level has increased.]

[Pet: 'Arsha's' level has increased.]

[...]

Arsha, having started at level 1, was leveling up at a rapid pace.

Whoosh!

But as she leaped into the air towards the hive being built for her. Nidhögg could no longer just watch...

Kuwaaaaang!

It opened its mouth and spewed poisonous breath at her, thankfully Suho's hand blocked the attack just in time.

[Skill: 'Breath of Destruction' is used.]

Bang!

Suho's Breath of Destruction and Nidhögg's poisonous attack collided in midair resulting in a massive explosion.

"Forget about them, come play with me."

Growl!

Nidhögg gnashed his teeth and attacked Suho. But it didn't have just one head... The other ones turned towards Arsha, aiming at her from various directions.

"We'll take care of this side!"

Shriek!

With Sirka's shout, the ice arrows resumed their barrage, hindering Nidhögg's movements from all sides. The attack was effective, as shown by the system message in front of Suho.

[Debuff: 'Frigid Cold' slows Nidhögg's movement speed.]

[Debuff: 'Frigid Cold' slows Nidhögg's attack speed.]

Countless attacks poured down on the slowed Nidhögg. Strikes from numerous Demons, led by Esil, the Demon King, the Monarch of Gluttony, as well as shots from the magic cannons of the Shadow Dwarves. And slashes from... Gray.

[Growl!]

Gray, from the moment Suho appeared, no longer held back. A hunting dog that had reunited with his master was more valiant than ever.

2

Thump! Thump! Thump!

He ran along Nidhögg's long body, tearing into it with his teeth wherever he could reach.

Clang!

Sparks flew as Gray's fangs and Nidhögg's hard scales clashed.

[The King of Beasts, the Monarch of Fangs, bares his teeth and laughs!]

1

Gray, having traveled to the Sea of Afterlife, had become much larger than humans. Yet, compared to Nidhögg, it was still a small creature. But...

[Growl!]

A born hunter doesn't back down because of the size of his prey. The bigger the kill, the greater the glory when the hunt succeeds!

[The King of Beasts, the Monarch of Fangs, shouts to bite the neck!]

Crunch!

Gray's claws dug into the gaps between the writhing scales and using his forelegs as support, he sunk his teeth into Nidhögg's neck, just as the Monarch of Fangs commanded. Of course, it was just a tickle to the serpent but after much effort, Gray's 'fangs' had definitely pierced its body.

[Gray uses Skill: 'Fatal Wound'.]

[Gray uses Skill: 'Paralysis'.]

[Gray uses Skill: 'Bleed'.]

...?!

Nidhögg, who had been trying to shake off Gray, clinging to him, showed signs of panic for the first time.

"How is it, Rakan? I told you it was a good idea to put in those dentures?" Suho, facing Nidhögg on the other side, chuckled.

1

The effects of the Item: 'Rakan's Fang' and Item: 'Kasaka's Venom Fang,' which he had equipped Gray with in the past, were working properly. Of course, the debuffs didn't activate every time, but after such relentless biting, they were bound to trigger eventually. And no matter how many heads it had, it was still one body. Gray's skills seemed to have affected Nidhögg's main body, as all of its mouths simultaneously let out groaning sounds. And as a result...

Grrrrrrrrrrrrrrrr...!

A scream erupted from Nidhögg's mouth, which had been still until now. It was the head into which Ammut had jumped. And suddenly...

Thud!

...?!

Ammut's fist, enveloped in a black aura, suddenly pierced Nidhögg's eye and protruded from inside.

1

"Ammut!"

[Don't interfere, High Priest!] Ammut's urgent voice, recognizing Suho instantly, rang out from inside.

4

[This one is mine!]

Thwack!

The fist that had pierced through Nidhögg's eye went back inside and tremendous explosions erupted from within. Nidhögg's head bulged as if it were about to burst.

Thwack!

Boom!

Crack! Bang!

No one knew what kind of battle was unfolding inside, but Ammut was panting. Nevertheless, what emanated from him was unbridled joy.

3

[I've always wondered! Huff...]

[Tarnak! Huff...]

[What kind of power is the Primordial Darkness you obtained! Huff...]

Ammut was giving it his all. He didn't want any help from the High Priest. The one fighting him in that pitch-black abyss was Tarnak. No... the Primordial Darkness, which allowed him to exist as the King of Monstrous Humanoids and the Monarch of the Iron Body. It was facing him in the form Ammut desired. That's why he was more delighted than ever.

[I've always envied you! Why is growth a privilege only given to the weak! Huff...]

Ammut, voluntarily or involuntarily, had been training the weak for a very long time. In that process, some grew as he intended and became strong. Some, unable to endure, died like vermin. But no matter what anyone said, Ammut was the most radical and perfect teacher for those numerous weaklings. However, there was one thing he had overlooked.

[But do you know this, Tarnak!] Ammut laughed as he punched the Tarnak-like Primordial Darkness.

[...The teacher learns much more than the student!]

...!

At first, it was completely unimaginable. Continuing to teach the weak unexpectedly meant that the teacher, who repeated all those exercises, gained much more than experience. In other words, he experienced growth. Ammut, the strongest of the monstrous humanoids who was born strong and thought growth was something reminiscent of dying of old age, had now...

'Grown.'

[The current me! Is stronger than the past me!] Ammut burst into laughter, violently grabbing and tearing apart the Tarnak in front of him.

Rip!

1

And.

Tear!

4

His hands tore the Primordial Darkness. Nidhögg's head, which had swallowed Ammut, exploded.

[A new monarch inherits The 'Primordial Darkness'.]

1

Whoosh!

Absorbing the torn Primordial Darkness, enveloped in the black of the abyss, Ammut chuckled and glared.

[Hahaha! Did you see that! I wanted to show you this, you who are already dead!]

Towards the King of the Monstrous Humanoids and the Monarch of the Iron Body, who had died helplessly in the war.

[The fact that I, too, can grow like you!]

Thus, he delivered his final lesson to his weak disciple, Tarnak.

[...So you too could have become stronger than that.]

But why? Despite absorbing the Primordial Darkness, Ammut's lips were tinged with bitterness. A trace of lingering attachment to his disciple who had died too soon.

[So Tarnak, you... you died because you were weak. You should have trained more.]

Flash!

[The King of Monstrous Humanoids, the Lord of Trials, is born.]

6

Thus, Ammut returned as a new monarch.

However instead of relishing the moment he unhesitatingly leaped to the side, kicking Nidhögg's jaws as they were moving towards Arsha.

Bang!

He used the recoil to leap up and tear apart the jaws of the head that was wrestling with Gray.

Rip!

1

Kyaaaaak!

Nidhögg screamed. And in the midst of that, Ammut picked up Gray, who was hanging below, and forcefully shoved him into Nidhögg's open mouth.

[So, 'Fang', stop wasting time and finish this quickly. If you fail and come back, you'll die by my hand.]

[Grrr?!]

[No... be sure to fail and come back. Then I'll train you until you wish you were dead.]

[...?!]

1

Thump!

With Ammut's meaningful smile as Gray's last sight, Nidhögg's mouth had closed once again.

[Growl...!]

Gray was helplessly sucked into Nidhögg. And witnessing that sight...

[The King of Beasts and the Monarch of Fangs, gapes with his jaw on the floor.]

2

"...Huh?" Suho's expression was no different from Rakan's.

1

Whoosh...!

The frigid cold permeated the World Tree. But everyone engaged in the fierce battle froze with the same shocked appearance.

*CREATORS' THOUGHTS*



Craftyprogamer

## **Solo Leveling: Ragnarok [FAN TL] Chapter 328 - Chapter 326**

### **Chapter 328: Chapter 326**

Grrrrrr!

Nidhögg, its jaws forced shut by Ammut, began to thrash violently. Despite that it had no choice but to swallow Gray whole, which initiated the succession ceremony. Realizing this, Ammut finally released Nidhögg, who then hurriedly fled upwards, climbing the World Tree's trunk with Gray trapped inside, a stark contrast to its previous arrogance when aiming for the roots. Beru was aghast, seeing Ammut nonchalantly allow the now four-headed monster to escape.

1

[Kieek! What are you doing!]



[Don't worry. He'll do just fine.] But Ammut merely shrugged with an indifferent expression. Despite his seemingly insane act of shoving Gray into the Primordial Darkness, he was confident.

[Did you really think I'd just leave that weak pup alone...?]

[Kiek?]

"Wait, wait. You don't mean...?"

Suho couldn't help but pause at those words. Thinking back, where did Gray usually stay? It was the shadow dungeon. When Suho called, he would always join the battles outside, but what did he do the rest of the time? As far as Suho knew, Gray was steadily growing by feeding on the prey they had hunted together in the shadow dungeon. The Fang Monarch once said that the best thing for Gray's growth was to eat well and rest well. But was that really the case? Considering that, of all things, a crazy crocodile who was itching to torment the weak was living right next to him?

He smirked.

[...Yeah, that's right.]

Looking at the retreating figure of Nidhögg, who had swallowed Gray and was fleeing with its tail between its legs, Ammut curved his lips into a most wicked smile. It was an utterly delighted grin.

[Lim Dogyoon. That weakling human was much less rewarding to torment... I mean train, than that little wolf.]

5

'...He definitely said torment.'

1

'His true feelings slipped out.'

2

At that moment, Suho's and Beru's eyes met in mid-air, and they both gulped. He was definitely a crazy crocodile who simply enjoyed tormenting the weak as a hobby. Realizing that, the expression Gray made as he disappeared into the darkness seemed to make sense. It seemed that Gray...

[So don't worry and wait. He'll somehow inherit the Primordial Darkness and return. That succession ceremony thing, I tried it myself, and it's nothing special.] Having

"reassured" everyone, Ammut folded his arms leisurely, gazing up at the World Tree where Nidhögg had disappeared.

[From now on, I'll watch Nidhögg. In the meantime, you guys do what you were doing.]

The direction Ammut was gazing towards was where Arsha was diligently building her hive. She was using countless Void Insects to build her own enormous kingdom on the trunk of the World Tree. And as she did, her presence grew stronger.

[If that's how insects grow, there's nothing I can do to help.]

Muttering and smacking of his lips, Ammut's low words made Arsha, in the hive, shudder. There had never been a moment when she was more grateful for being an insect.

"Besides, the Monarch of Trials. You've got a fitting nickname." At Suho's words, Ammut looked at him with a slightly displeased expression.

[Tsk. I didn't choose it.]

[It's the result of your father's intervention.]

"What? My father?" Suho tilted his head at the unexpected statement. Ammut chuckled and spoke, recalling the illusion of Sung Jinwoo that had once appeared before him.

[Yes. The pyramid I was trapped in was a magical prison perfected by that damned Kandiaru after countless experiments. The ultimate goal of that research was to train the weak through me, the 'trial'.]

The Iron Body Training Ground, the pyramid where Ammut was trapped, was a place to train in Iron Body techniques, to transcend the inherent limitations of one's race. Its ultimate purpose was to strengthen the vessel of one's soul. But most died, either with their physical bodies shattered or their souls exploding.

[But one day, your father's illusion appeared there. Then, he casually fiddled with the magical circles Kandiaru had designed and disappeared.]

Even Ammut, who was rarely surprised, couldn't help but be astonished at that moment. After that day, many things changed, including his own spiritual body trapped in the pyramid, the very purpose of which was altered in a completely different direction from what Kandiaru had intended.

[I'm only good at fighting; I don't know much about the fancy magic that sorcerers use. But even I... know a lot about the spells cast on that pyramid. For a very long time, it was the vessel containing my soul.]

Now that Ammut had been reborn as a monarch, he could exist outside the structure.

[But ironically, the pyramid is still a shackle on me. The only consolation is that if it was a prison before, now it feels like a much less restrictive handcuff. In short, the name 'Monarch of Trials' means that even now, as a monarch, I am still one with that place.]

It was a bitter statement. It meant that even though he had obtained the Primordial Darkness and become a monarch, Ammut was still not completely free from the prison Kandiaru had created.

6

[But it can't be helped. If it weren't for that prison, I would have died of old age long ago.]

Well, what could he do? It was Kandiaru's pyramid that had prolonged the inherently limited lifespan of Ammut, the strongest crocor, until now, so he couldn't be completely free of it even at this moment, having become a monarch.

He smirked. [...So your father gave me a choice. To become a shadow soldier and be free from death, or to endure humiliation and become a monarch while alive. And I simply chose the latter of my own free will.] By now, Ammut, looking down at Suho, assumed a carefree expression.

[So, Sung Suho. I'm truly grateful to you. I was able to become a monarch thanks to you acting properly as the priest.]

"Earlier, you said a priest wasn't necessary?"

[I meant it wouldn't be necessary from now on. Since we've already arrived here, the role of the priest is no longer needed.]

"Well, that's true."

Suho nodded, understanding the meaning of his words. The dead monarchs' priest. The role he had been playing so far. It was to find suitable successors to the monarchs, or to grow them, and help them inherit the Primordial Darkness. In the process, time stopped, he met dead monarchs who had returned to nothingness. He intervened in dreams and helped with the succession ceremony. But in the end, all those processes were secondary. Ultimately, the priest's job was to bring the successors to the Primordial Darkness, 'wherever it may be.'

But look. As Ammut said, there was no need for such a cumbersome method now. They had directly found the Primordial Darkness! They had launched a fleet into the endless expanse, the Sea of Afterlife, and found the World Tree where the Primordial Darkness was directly gathered. From now on, why would they need a priest as an intermediary?

[Do you understand now?] Ammut smiled contentedly at Suho.

[You have done an unparalleled job as a priest. Surely, even your father couldn't have envisioned that you would do this well. The proof: He created a shortcut to the Sea of Afterlife at the end of the pyramid.]

Insurance in case his son couldn't find the Sea of Afterlife. Sung Jinwoo's illusion had prepared for that too, but his son had chosen the difficult path over the easy and fast one. As a result, he had to do a lot... But, in the process, everyone got what they wanted. 'Growth'

As a result, Ammut, who had independently become the King of Monstrous Humanoids, the Monarch of Trials, did not overestimate his achievements. What he had done was not a big deal in the first place.

[From what I experienced, inheriting the Primordial Darkness is something anyone with the qualifications can do. The most difficult part is reaching it.]

3

The Sea of Afterlife. The World Tree. Nidhögg. A pilgrimage to overcome all those trials and find it. It was the priest who guided the way in that dark and imperceptible abyss. But Suho wasn't content with the role of an ordinary priest; he paved the way himself. He pierced the dimensional gap. He found the entrance to the Sea of Afterlife. He built ships from the elves' sacred tree and explored the Sea of Afterlife with demons. As a result, he found the World Tree. In the end, he even froze the deadly aura, which dominates the Sea of Afterlife, with a harsh winter.

1

[Sung Suho. No... Priest of the Monarchs and the son of the Shadow Monarch.] Ammut's, who had been watching Suho's path all along, became serious.

2

[If it weren't for you, I could never have reached this place. I wouldn't even have been able to encounter the Primordial Darkness.]

Ammut would have wandered aimlessly in the Sea of Afterlife without the ship of demons that Suho had prepared in advance, and would have melted into the abyss like other spirits. Even if he had been lucky enough to find this place, if Nidhögg hadn't been sluggish due to the harsh cold. Or if Nidhögg had just a couple more heads than it did now, even Ammut wouldn't have been able to deal with it so easily. Knowing better than anyone how much help he got, Ammut could only sincerely acknowledge Suho's achievements and he could only be grateful.

[...Thank you. Because of you, I was able to satisfy a long-standing promise.]

"Promise?"

[Yes. I wanted to properly beat up that disciple of mine who died so carelessly on the battlefield. Heh, heh, heh.]

-Tarnak. You are my disciple before you are the King of Monstrous Humanoids. If you lose, I'll kill you with my own hands.

Ammut suddenly recalled. The last regards he gave to Tarnak, who was leaving for the battlefield. At the time he had a confident expression, but in the end, he paid the price for that foolishness today. He ended up being pummeled by his teacher even after death.

[That's why I willingly chose to become the Monarch of Trials. To help you. So I will always be your teacher. For your growth. I will give you 'trials'.]

"Ah." Suho's expression twitched at those words.

[The King of Monstrous Humanoids, the Monarch of Trials, swears allegiance to you.]

[The King of Monstrous Humanoids, the Monarch of Trials, offers you the 'Tower of Trials'.]

4

[A daily quest has arrived.]

"...."

It was dizzying. While swearing allegiance, the offering was a 'trial'. Seeing the quest that immediately followed, Suho felt his vision darken. It seemed that the daily quests would become much more difficult in the future, so he was afraid to open the information window. But...

He smirked.

"I don't have to suffer alone." Soon, a mischievous smile formed on Suho's lips.

4

'Tower of Trials'

The concentrated magic that had turned from Ammut's prison into an extension of himself. There was a way to utilize it much more effectively.

\* \* \*

"...I understand."

Yoo Jinho, the CEO of Ahjin Soft, nodded silently after receiving Suho's call. He immediately turned his head and calmly gave instructions to the secretaries waiting beside him.

"It seems we need to buy some land. Right now."

"Yes, sir."

"Which area are you referring to?"

It wasn't difficult for the company to purchase real estate. Even with the condition of 'as soon as possible' attached, it wasn't impossible if they were willing to spend more money. But the secretaries, who were calmly taking notes on the CEO's instructions, couldn't help but be puzzled by his following words.

"The outskirts of the capital cities around the world. The most densely populated downtown areas."

"...Yes?"

At that moment, the secretaries started doubting their ears. All over the world? Of course, even Yoo Jinho couldn't be thinking about something crazy like buying an entire city. It was a few small areas per city. Ahjin Soft, a global company, had enough funds for that. But the problem was something else entirely, the purpose of the purchase.

1

"Hurry up. It's going to start soon."

Rumble! Rumble! Rumble!

Before he could finish his words, earthquakes began to occur simultaneously in the capitals of the world.

"Aaaah! It's a gate...!"

People screamed everywhere around the world. But surprisingly, there were no casualties. This earthquake wasn't normal, so the ground didn't actually shake, the dimension did. The dimensional wave pushed all the people nearby outside, creating an instance dungeon. And above it...

Rumble!

Rumble!

The mysterious black pyramids, slowly revealing their magnificent forms, left everyone speechless.

– Wh-what is that!

– A pyramid?!

– A pyramid suddenly sprang up from the ground!

While everyone around the world was panicking. To end the chaos as quickly as possible, Ahjin Soft, which had purchased all the land, announced the name of the pyramid that appeared.

2

[Tutorial: Tower of Trials]

3

It was the moment when Ahjin Soft's mega-project, named 'Solo Leveling: Ragnarok', was unveiled to the world.

4

*CREATORS' THOUGHTS*



Craftyprogamer

## **Solo Leveling: Ragnarok [FAN TL] Chapter 329 - Chapter 327**

### **Chapter 329: Chapter 327**

Black pyramids, soaring high into the sky, astonished people all over the world with their mysterious and overwhelming presence.

In the middle of Manhattan, New York.

Near the River Thames in London.

On the Han River in Seoul.

Pyramids, piercing through the walls of dimensions, appeared in all the major cities of various countries around the world, including Paris, Beijing, and Tokyo, becoming the main topic in all conversations.

"...This actually worked."

Yoo Jinho, standing by the window and looking at the distant pyramid, smiled wryly amidst the busy movement of his secretaries.

"Tsk. As expected, he is 'His' son after all... That scale..." At first, he had worried whether there would be enough time to buy the land, but fortunately, it was not an issue.

'The Tower of Trials.'

The pyramid, given to Suho by Ammut, who had been reborn as the King of Monstrous Humanoids and the Monarch of Trials, was completely different from the typical Gates that occurred randomly like natural disasters. The timing and location of its appearance were entirely at Suho's discretion, with locations pre-selected using shadow soldiers he had spread across the world as markers, the method employing Harmakan's magic, and most importantly, the timing...

After Ahjin Soft had gone through the proper legal procedures, made urgent contacts with governments of various countries, and swiftly purchased suitable land, only then did they proceed, step by step. However, the fact that all of this was completed in just one day was entirely due to the global influence of Ahjin Soft, which Yoo Jinho had built up over the years. Virtual reality games were already a huge trend, established as a global culture long ago. And for virtual reality games to work, Game Capsules were needed in each country. In other words, Ahjin Soft, a global corporation, had already established local branches around the world for the purpose of distributing Game Capsules. So, using those local branches to purchase land locally was not a problem. Suddenly erecting buildings in a 'somewhat unusual way' on that land was done too. Under the pretext of a 'new game,' everything could proceed smoothly.

"CEO, inquiries are pouring in."

A secretary entered, holding a tablet. The screen was filled with endless contact attempts from media outlets and inquiries from government officials of various countries.

"Of course. Everyone must be dying of curiosity."

Anticipating the response, Yoo Jinho, with a mischievous, prankster-like smile, tightened his tie. It had been a long time since he had personally appeared at an official event like this, or felt such excitement just before a presentation.

"Is the official press release ready?"



"Yes, it's been prepared. Please review it."

Yoo Jinho took the tablet handed to him by the secretary and scanned the document. Since it was content he had prepared after consulting with Suho, nothing special was added. However, every single detail was confidential. It was entirely up to him to decide how much of this to reveal to the public and in what way.

– I'll leave the rest to you, Uncle.

Surprisingly, Suho had entrusted all the important parts to Yoo Jinho, even after setting up this entire system. As if it were only natural.

– It's a game you made, Uncle.

'A game I made...' A faint smile formed on Yoo Jinho's lips as he recalled Suho's words. Yes, he was the one who started it. For the greater good, and at the same time, to pursue personal gain. It was his game that he had meticulously prepared, step by step. But many things have changed...

"...You're wrong, Suho."

Yoo Jinho, heading to the conference room, murmured confidently.

"It's not a game I made, it's a game we made..."

As he opened the door to the auditorium, the waiting reporters simultaneously held up their cameras.

Flash Flash Flash Flash Flash!

Yoo Jinho's eyes, basked in the numerous camera flashes pouring down on him, gleamed.

"It's a game that all of us here will build together."

At this very moment, a game for all mankind was announced.

– Ahjin Soft Unveils Innovative 'Solo Leveling : Ragnarok' Project

– Pyramids Appearing Worldwide! Revealed to be a Hyper-Realistic Training Ground for All Humanity!

– Now, even non-Awakened individuals can become Hunters? Ahjin Soft's Astonishing Technological Innovation!

News headlines around the world were all focused on the 'Tower of Trials'.

- Ahjin Soft's CEO, Yoo Jinho, held an emergency press conference today and revealed the purpose of the pyramids that have appeared around the world!

- These pyramids, called 'Towers of Trials,' are said to be hyper-realistic training grounds where all of humanity can develop combat abilities!

- He stated that by combining existing virtual reality technology with the newly unveiled avatar technology, they have built a system where even non-Awakened individuals can use the abilities of Hunters inside the Tower of Trials!

- Governments of various countries have stated that they will conduct urgent safety inspections and carefully review whether this system poses a threat to humanity!

– ...?!

With the sudden announcement, people around the world were astonished, and their jaws dropped. But then they cheered wildly. After the Cataclysm, in a world where only hunters could wield magic power, non-Awakened individuals had always felt a relative sense of deprivation. But now, they too had a chance to awaken; Through the Tower of Trials!

"That's nuts! Can I become a Hunter too?"

"Is that really possible? Can I become strong like an S-rank Hunter?"

"You idiot! Use some common sense. It's obviously a publicity stunt for a new game from Ahjin Soft! Do you really think you'll actually awaken just by playing a game?"

"Tsk, 'common sense'! Do you think Gates suddenly appearing and monsters showing up is common sense?"

"Yeah, man! Since when do we live in a world where common sense is worth anything"

"Is it so impossible for a game that lets you awaken as a Hunter to exist, when Gates are appearing everyday?"

"Yeah! I always believed in them! I knew Ahjin Soft would do something!"

"W-wait, you don't mean... Do you still have Ahjin stock?"

"Hahaha! HODLing wins!"

Ahjin Soft's stock price went to the moon. But people already knew from experience, investing in Ahjin Soft's stock early was no less of a jackpot than actually awakening.

\* \* \*

However amidst the explosive expectations and excitement around the world. Not everyone reacted enthusiastically.

[World Hunter Association]

"Just what were you thinking, doing something so insane!"

Right now, Woo Jinchul, the president of the Korean Hunter Association, was standing before the presidents of Hunter Associations from all over the world, facing intense protests.

Of course, there was no way for these incredibly busy and important people to gather in one place. Ironically, they were holding an emergency meeting in virtual reality right now. The reason: gathering here eliminated the need to travel long distances, and above all, the automatic translation system allowed for smoother communication. As such, virtual reality was already being used in various fields beyond just simple game content, establishing itself as a metaverse system. Of course, this was also a product developed by Ahjin Soft. Despite that the heated debates going on right now were mainly focused on condemning their actions.

"How is this even possible? Your irresponsible remarks have gone too far!"

"To say that ordinary people can all become Awakened?!"

"Even as a promotional event for a game, this is crossing the line!"

"Are you ignoring the impact Ahjin Soft has on the world?!"

"..."

Woo Jinchul had been silently listening to the complaints of the association presidents targeting him. He was sitting in a relaxed position, arms crossed, telegraphing that he would listen to whatever they had to say. Although it was called a meeting, in reality, this place was no different from an interrogation of Woo Jinchul.

A project to create Awakened people, launched solely by a mere game company, was that impactful. It would have been one thing if it was only operating in Korea, but Towers of Trials had appeared simultaneously all over the world, so people around the globe were in an uproar.

"Towers of Trials!"

"No matter what they are, explain how did you..."

"To artificially create Gates just to construct buildings! And that too, on other countries' land, without permission!"

"What sort of dangerous experiments are you conducting in Korea!"

"...Hmm." After listening for a long time, Woo Jinchul finally opened his mouth. A faint smile hanging on his lips.

"Well, everyone, please calm down first."

"Now, that's...!"

"First of all, we bought the land through legal procedures, and THEN we constructed the buildings. Is there any legal problem with buying long-term lease rights in places where the land owners refused to sell?"

"You didn't construct the buildings in a normal way!" At that shameless response, the Brazilian Association president in front of him burst into anger. But Woo Jinchul just shrugged, looking even more relaxed.

"So what? Is how a building is constructed on land they own a problem?"

"Come on! Is that what you should be saying? You opened Gates in other countries without permission?"

"Ah, we should address that first. Didn't you hear CEO Yoo Jinho's statement? He didn't open the Gates without permission; he chose the areas where Gates occurred and bought the land there."

"Are we really supposed to believe that!? It's as if this was all planned, buying land simultaneously, all over the world!"

"Oh, so you're saying that Ahjin Soft may have developed a way to arbitrarily create Gates? Don't you think that's even more shocking? Well, I'm not an engineering student, so I have no idea if Ahjin Soft, which developed this virtual reality, might be capable of such a thing."

"Now... that's not what I meant...!"

"If it's not that, then please get to the point. Don't beat around the bush, we're all busy."

"I apologize for attending without permission. I thought it would be rude to interrupt since you were talking about me."

At that moment, the chilling voice was suddenly heard from above, all the hunter associations presidents who had been arguing couldn't help but flinch simultaneously. They all looked up, as if by prior agreement. And there, an intruder, who had not been invited to this meeting, was slowly descending.

"...!"

The association presidents were taken aback when they recognized the uninvited guest's identity. For reference, this virtual reality space was a private server that only hunter associations presidents registered with the World Association could access. In other words, it was a virtual space that could never be entered without an invitation. But as far as they knew, if there existed someone who could enter this place without permission it would be the one who designed this virtual reality.

1

'Yoo Jinho'

Thud!

Yoo Jinho looked at the faces of the association presidents, one by one, with a most arrogant gaze. Numerous S-rank Hunters. The representative figures of superhumans all over the world, exuding an aura that he wouldn't dare to even look at outside, were glaring at him. But no matter how great those figures were, in this virtual reality, they couldn't harm him in any way. The proof of that was right there. The association presidents of the world couldn't even complain about his unauthorized intrusion into the meeting room.

He smirked. "It's in the terms and conditions. It says that for the smooth creation of a virtual reality environment, the CEO is allowed to do whatever he wants." It was a clause he had just added for fun at first, but he could abuse it a little in cases like this.

At Yoo Jinho's intrusion, Thomas Andre, who had been sitting back and watching with his arms crossed from the beginning, grinned.

2

"It's been a long time. It seems the kid from back then is now the strongest one here."

*CREATORS' THOUGHTS*



Craftyprogamer

# Solo Leveling: Ragnarok [FAN TL] Chapter 330 - Chapter 328

## Chapter 330: Chapter 328

"CEO Yoo! You've come at just the right time!"

"CEO Yoo! What in the world are you doing, using a game as a pretext?!"

"Is it true that all people can awaken in the Tower of Trials?!"

The hunter associations presidents, momentarily flustered by the sudden intrusion, quickly regained their composure and began to berate him, instead of Woo Jinchul. An immense pressure bore down on Yoo Jinho. The combined aura of the world's hunter associations presidents and the heads of powerful guilds, all S-rank Hunters with considerable influence in their respective countries, was incredibly intimidating. But, in the end, this was merely virtual reality and Yoo Jinho, the highest authority in this world, remained unfazed by their sharp reactions, maintaining a relaxed demeanor.

"Ah, if you had gotten to the point from the beginning, wouldn't we have saved each other time? Instead of nitpicking about real estate laws and whatnot. And there are still a few countries that haven't yet purchased the land; you'd better hurry up and get it done. Once the server officially opens, it'll be too late... And you will regret missing out." With that casual remark, Yoo Jinho flicked his finger, and a plush executive chair sprouted from the empty space. He plopped down, crossed his legs, and delivered a sharp rebuke to everyone.

"Anyway, since you all seem so curious, I'll get straight to the point. Yes, it's true. Anyone can awaken in the Tower of Trials. The abilities gained within will, to a certain extent, be reflected even upon returning to reality. In fact, depending on one's effort, one may even gain far more than from an ordinary Awakening."

"...?!"

Everyone's eyes widened at the shocking statement, coming not from some media campaign but from Yoo Jinho's own mouth

"I-Is that true?"

"Is such a thing really possible?"

It was only natural to be surprised. The media always distorts and exaggerates the truth. The reason...? That's the only way to attract more attention. That's why the world is full of fake news and clickbait articles. Therefore, none of those gathered here took

the hype at face value. But CEO Yoo Jinho himself had just confirmed that it was all true. And the weight of his last words was not insignificant.

"What does it mean that one may gain far more than from an ordinary Awakening?"

The one to pinpoint that part was none other than Thomas Andre. His expression had been one of amused interest from the beginning, grinning as if he found the whole situation entertaining. Yoo Jinho looked at him and replied,

"You're focusing on the wrong part. The sentence before that is more important."

"Hm... 'Depending on their effort'?"

"Yes." Yoo Jinho sat facing Thomas Andre, a playful smile on his lips.

"As announced, the Tower of Trials is merely a tutorial for the main game. Gaining power will require considerable effort."

"That's obvious. So what is this 'effort'?"

"Grit. Resilience. Perseverance. Tenacity. And above all... the courage to defy even death in order to become stronger." At those meaningful words, everyone's expressions changed. In the middle of the conversation, the Canadian Association President raised his hand and interjected.

"Defy even death? Are you saying that people might actually die while playing the game?"

3

"Of course not. The actual body remains in the game capsule; only the avatar in the game dies. And aren't you already used to this? After all, this place is the same."

Sweep—

With those words, Yoo Jinho casually raised a hand, and suddenly a giant shadow loomed over everyone's heads.

They all looked up, and to their astonishment, Yoo Jinho's palm, magnified to an enormous size, appeared in the sky. As if it were about to crush everyone there like flies. The Hunters of the world, suddenly reduced to the status of insects, glared at him with displeasure. But, outside world aside, there was no reason for Yoo Jinho to fear those gazes inside here. The ultimate administrator of this server, Yoo Jinho, withdrew his hand with a mischievous smile and continued his explanation.

"As you can see, even if I were to kill you all here right now, you would simply wake up in your game capsules, wherever they may be, just as you always do. And humanity is already accustomed to this situation. After all, avatars can be revived any number of times, no matter how often they die. Dozens or even hundreds of times, if necessary. Besides, the avatars we've developed have quite a bit of resilience, so while something might hurt enough to make you feel like dying, there won't be any pain beyond that."

"Hurt enough to feel like dying? Does that mean it's far more realistic than existing virtual reality games? To the point of leaving trauma?"

"That depends on the person, I suppose. After all, people who don't like horror games simply don't play them, do they? We're not forcing anyone to play. If they're scared of that, they simply don't have to challenge the Tower of Trials. And in that spirit, the Tower of Trials will be restricted to those 19 years of age and older."

"...."

The more they listened, the more serious people's expressions became. Everyone gathered here was a Hunter, intimately familiar with death, so they knew all too well what kind of pain one could experience in deadly battles. Having arms torn off, legs severed, in fights against magical beasts. Even if they miraculously survived and were restored to their original state by top-tier healers, the moment their lives were in danger was indelibly etched into their brains. Overcoming the fear of death ingrained in that memory and charging back into battle against magical beasts was not as easy as it sounded.

The Canadian Association President spoke gravely.

"CEO Yoo, you... What is the purpose of developing something like this? What are you trying to achieve by increasing the number of Awakened individuals?"

"Hm. My purpose..." Yoo Jinho stared intently at the face of the Canadian Association President, who had been interrogating him from the start.

"I have no personal, selfish purpose."

Although he had aged, Yoo Jinho remembered his face clearly.

Jay Mills.

4

An S-rank Hunter representing Canada.

In the past, when Sung Jinwoo had announced that those who could not fight should flee as far as possible, this man was the representative of the Hunters who had



criticized Sung Jinwoo and vowed to fight to the end in front of the Gates. His methods were wrong, but he couldn't be blamed. After all, he had risked his life to protect his country, only to meet a futile end. His mistake was being ignorant about...

4

How strong the enemies were.

How precarious humanity's situation was.

Without a proper grasp of the situation, he had, in any case, shown courage to protect people, risking his life. At least that fact had to be acknowledged. Therefore...

'I have to make it clear this time.'

Who our enemies are.

How weak humanity is.

With that thought, Yoo Jinho met Jay Mills's gaze.

"Jay Mills. If you truly care about Canada's safety, you should be the first to challenge the Tower of Trials."

1

"...What?"

"The Tower of Trials is open not only to non-Awakened individuals but also to hunters. In fact, I hope that Awakened individuals will utilize it even more. After all, the game we created, 'Solo Leveling: Ragnarok,' was initially intended as a project for the training of hunters. Therefore, I implore... all of you here to clear the Tower of Trials before anyone else. Then you will naturally understand."

"Understand... what?"

"The truth."

"What?"

With those words, Yoo Jinho rose from his seat and extended his hand towards everyone gathered there. Then, at that moment...

Ting!

Ting!

[An invitation to Tutorial: 'Tower of Trials' has arrived.]

[An invitation to Tutorial: 'Tower of Trials' has arrived.]

[An invitation to Tutorial: 'Tower of Trials' has arrived.]

"...!"

Suddenly, mysterious keys appeared in front of all the hunter associations presidents.

"I will grant all of you here beta tester access, by my authority. That key is a link that connects the game capsule you are currently in to the Tower of Trials. Using that key, you can enter the Tower of Trials immediately."

"...!"

"If you're truly so curious, experience it for yourselves. Right away... Now, if you'll excuse me, I'm busy."

2

Fwoosh—

Having accomplished his purpose here, Yoo Jinho's form vanished from the spot without hesitation. But even after he disappeared, the associations presidents stared at the mysterious keys in their hands with complicated expressions for a long time.

"If I use this... I can enter right now?"

Why were their hands, holding the black keys, sweating? It was a strange moment to realize that, but this virtual reality system was truly remarkable. To simulate even the cold sweat caused by emotional changes... It was truly a magical world.

In this brutal reality where monsters suddenly appeared, and Hunters with awakened abilities fought them with swords and shields...

Perhaps the highly advanced scientific power of humanity was an even more magical thing. That's why everyone gathered here was nervous. Ajin Soft, and CEO Yoo Jinho's technology, had now made it possible to turn even ordinary people into hunters.

"If this is real... Yoo Jinho will become the god of a new world." At someone's murmur, bitter smiles spread across the faces of the world's associations presidents.

3

Aside from one person.

"A god is too much, maybe a monarch of humans." Thomas Andre was chuckling, saying that he would be glad to live long enough to see it. And he, before anyone else, grasped the key and spoke.

6

"I will enter the Tower of Trials."

"...!"

At that bold statement, everyone looked at him in surprise. Then, the black key in Thomas Andre's grasp emitted a black energy that swirled, opening a Gate in front of him.

"Oh ho. So you can enter directly from virtual reality. That's a fancy feature."

Before anyone could stop him, Thomas stepped into the Gate without hesitation.

[Entering Tutorial: 'Tower of Trials'.]

As he passed through the Gate...

Whoosh!

A tremendous landscape unfolded before his eyes. A vast, ruined city, filled with black and white shadows...

"...Where is this?"

The Statue of Liberty, toppled.

New York, utterly destroyed, with only rubble remaining.

Thomas Andre, who had appeared alone in the middle of it, frowned. Bad memories were resurfacing.

"Is this... the past?"

2

'Or the future to come?'

"Tsk. From the outside, it looked like a pyramid, but the inside is a complete recreation of a destroyed Earth."

Even though Thomas Andre was old, he knew the basics of virtual reality games. It seemed that the black pyramids that had appeared all over the world were not actual buildings, but rather served as a kind of base station. And through those numerous base stations, people from all over the world could enter this vast dimension.

1

Anyway, looking around this gray city, where not a trace of life could be felt, he realized something anew.

"Sung Jinwoo, without him, Earth would have ended up like this." He felt a renewed sense of debt to Sung Jinwoo, who was said to be fighting alone in space. But then...

"Thomas..."

"Hm?"

In the empty lot, where it seemed no living being could possibly exist, a presence was felt. A dying voice was heard from somewhere, and Thomas Andre turned his head. There, leaning against a wall, was an old woman covered in blood and wounds, dying. At the sight of her, Thomas Andre's eyes widened.

"Norma Selner!"

'Norma Selner!'

Why was his only friend here?! Thomas Andre, who had entered with a light heart, felt his blood rush to his head at the sudden situation.

"Grandma!"

He rushed over to Norma Selner in one stride. Then, she looked at Thomas, smiling sadly, and spoke.

"Thomas... Fortunately, you survived."

Thomas Andre gritted his teeth. Even if this was a game, that was crossing a line! The Norma Selner in front of him couldn't be real. This was a common illusion used in virtual reality, an NPC recreated by reading the user's memories. He knew that perfectly well, but seeing his only friend dying so miserably right in front of him made him lose his mind.

"...Yoo Jinho, that bastard!"

"Thomas, don't be so angry. Everyone is equal in the face of death." Norma Selner, even while gasping for breath, steadfastly said what she had to say. Very much like an NPC.

"We fought desperately, but in the end, we lost."

"So this is the past!"

"It's both the past and the future. One of the many histories of our Earth being invaded." Norma Selner, murmuring weakly, coughed up blood.

1

Seeing that, Thomas Andre was at a loss for what to do. Even though he knew it was all fake, everything depicted before his eyes felt incredibly real. It was to the point that all the virtual reality games released by Ajin Soft until now felt clumsy; this place was far too realistic.

"But I'm glad. Thomas, you survived."

Fwoosh.

With Norma Selner's words, the black key in Thomas Andre's hand began to glow. Seeing that with her fading vision, Norma Selner said with a faint smile.

"You obtained that key. It is the hope created by gathering the last of humanity's power. Use it to return."

"Return where?"

"To the past. To the time when hope still remained..."

Ting.

[Do you wish to load the saved data?]

1

(Y/N)

It was a game, after all.

Seeing the choice suddenly appear before his eyes, Thomas Andre glared.

## *CREATORS' THOUGHTS*



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