

Solo Leveling: Ragnarok [FAN TL] Chapter 8 - Chapter 07

Chapter 8: Chapter 07

Beru was looking forward to Suho's reaction upon receiving the Shadow Monarch's true power, 'Shadow Extraction.'

– Oh my god, awesome!

– They're giving me this incredible ability as a reward?

– In the last quest, they gave stat points, and now they're giving a rune stone that allows me to learn a skill?!

– Wow! Is it okay to be this generous?!

If Suho reacted like that, Beru was planning to say, 'Ahem. Didn't I tell you? Everything for the Young Master is in this Shadow Dungeon!'

So he confidently declared with a smug expression, [Ahem! First of all, this level-up system is a support mechanism for the Young Master's stable growth. It's an improved version of the same system that my liege used, allowing his mortal human body to fully accept the overwhelming power of the Shadow Monarch...] Suho interrupted him and spoke,

"Hey, what? It's just a summoning skill...?" Suho's expression was one of clear disappointment.

[...!]

Beru was shocked. What was this absurd reaction?!

[Wh-what are you talking about! To have this incredible power and react like that!]

"No, but summoning skills are..." Suho explained.

Summoning skills were considered almost useless among Hunters these days. The dungeons beyond the Gates were truly dangerous places. If they were careless for even a moment, the Hunters' necks would be torn apart by the magical beasts' claws. The ground and ceiling were full of dangerous traps. No one could protect you in such a place. It wasn't a problem for combat-type Hunters with strong bodies, but mages had physical abilities similar to ordinary people. In particular those with summoning skills were the more vulnerable. Since they entrusted all the fighting to their summons, they were practically helpless burdens following behind.

"And that's not all. They consume a lot of mana, it's hard to find useful summons, and even if you manage to get one, it's not as strong as you'd expect."

[Nooo—!]

Beru, now stomping his feet with a frustrated and upset expression, was a far cry from the one who had previously mocked Suho's weak combat power; he was now the one riled up, causing Suho to feel a little sorry for him.

"Well, I'm sorry, but that's the reality. But still, it's good that I got the skill."

[Nooo! Don't try to comfort me with that condescending tone! This skill is one of a kind, don't you understand?!]

"Huh? Did your tone just change?"

[Huff* Huff] Beru's historical drama tone was crumbling.

"Alright, alright. Accept reward."

A rune stone materialised in Suho's hand

[Rune Stone: Shadow Extraction]

[The skill will be absorbed when the rune stone is broken.]

He broke the rune stone without hesitation.

[Learned Skill: 'Shadow Extraction'.]

Whoosh—!

Suho's shadow surged from under his feet, wrapped around him once, and disappeared.

Snap—!

The skill window appeared before his eyes.

[Skill: Shadow Extraction Lv.1]

[Shadow power.]

[No mana required.]

[Extracts mana from a lifeless body and turns it into a shadow soldier.]

[The probability of extraction failure increases in proportion to the target's stats.]

[The probability of extraction failure increases in proportion to the time elapsed since the target's death.]

[Number of shadows that can be extracted: 0 / 3]

"...Creating shadow soldiers?" Suho's gaze naturally shifted towards Beru: The shadow magical beast with black steam blazing from his body.

[That's correct.] Beru's mouth stretched into a wide grin.

[It's a skill that allows you to create soldiers like me. Shadow Extraction is the essence of the power that made the current Shadow Monarch, Sung Jinwoo, who he is.]

At that moment, Suho realized something about the numerous goblin corpses surrounding him: black smoke was rising from the bodies he had slain over the past four hours..

[Shadow extraction may be used on this target]

[Shadow extraction may be used on this target]

[Shadow extraction may be used on this target]

The same message popped up repeatedly whenever he looked at the black smoke emanating from the dead bodies.

'Shadow soldiers... A kind of necromancer skill?' The concept of creating soldiers from corpses was similar to necromancers commonly seen in games.

'It still doesn't seem that good.' He had seen it on the internet before. There were various types of summoning skills: summoning and taming spirits from nature, or domesticating and controlling living beasts.. But the worst class among them was the necromancer.

'Because of the restrictions.' First, needing a corpse was the biggest problem.

'I would have to hunt that corpse myself first. So I can only control those weaker than me.' He had to try it himself to understand it properly.

"Shadow Extraction." The following message appeared at Suho's words.

[Specify a command for the Shadow Extraction skill.]

"I have to specify a command for the skill? Hmm..." Suho pondered for a moment. And then Beru suddenly started squirming beside him with his eyes gleaming.

[Ahem. Ahem.]

"Why? Do you have something to say?"

When Suho looked at him, Beru looked away.

[Aris... Ahem. No... Cough, Cough!]

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"...?"

Why was he suddenly coughing like that? Suho narrowed his eyes. He didn't know what Beru was trying to say, but he chose the word without hesitation. A command should be intuitive.

"Arise."

[KIEEEEEEEEEEEK!] As if he had been waiting, Beru clenched his fists and shouted something strange like 'As expected!'

And then, something happened...

Kihihihi—!

Suddenly, the sound of goblins' laughter echoed through the air. And at the same time, the shadows began to wriggle from the corpses lying on the ground. As if they were alive!

'Oh my god.' Suho's eyes widened as he looked around.

Kihit! Keruk Keruk—!

Black hands stretched out from the shadows, accompanied by the incessant, mischievous laughter of villains. Grasping the ground, those hands pulled the rest of their forms from the darkness, like demons returning from hell.

[Shadow extraction successful.]

Whoosh—! Whoosh—!

[Keruk!]

[Keruk!]

Just like that, three black goblins, their entire bodies made of boiling black steam, appeared before Suho.

[Shadow Goblin Lv.1]

[Normal Grade]

"They don't look that strong." The sight of three Shadows lined up, waiting for his orders didn't impress Suho...

[...]

At this point, even Beru began to realize the vast difference in effectiveness between the Shadow Monarch Sung Jinwoo's use of the shadow power and its current application, despite it being the same ability. This disparity was natural; Sung Jinwoo was level 50 when he first obtained the power, whereas Suho was currently only level 7. No matter how good the skill, a low player level inevitably resulted in weaker performance.

[W-well... the freshly extracted soldiers are usually a bit less powerful than they were in life.]

"And their size is smaller?"

[Th-that's...]

"And of course, weaker?"

[Just a little?]

"And their speed..."

[...]

Beru muttered in a small voice, [The shadow power is affected by the Intelligence stat and level. It's a good skill later on... a truly amazing skill... Haa, there's no way to explain this...]

"Y-yes."

Suho, looking at the Shadow Goblins awaiting his orders, immediately prepared to return, startling Beru. At that very moment, a tremendous rumble emanated from his stomach.

Growl—!

"...I've been starving for two days." Suho said seriously.

[Ah, that's right.] Beru was overwhelmed by that sad truth. Whether it was a Hunter or the Shadow Monarch, they all needed to eat to survive.

[You can enter this place anytime using the Shadow Dungeon Key. Please rest for now.] As Beru said, Suho took out the Shadow Dungeon Key and inserted it into his shadow, just like when he entered.

[Exit the Shadow Dungeon?]

(Y/N)

"Exit."

Click.

The moment he turned the key, the shadow swallowed Suho.

Whoosh—!

[You have exited the Shadow Dungeon.]

Suho collapsed on the bed as soon as he returned to the real-world hospital.

'Haa. That was tough.' Suho let out a deep sigh as he finally lay on the fluffy bed after so long. It had only been four hours in reality, but it felt like four days had passed. Although all his stamina was restored with the level-up, he was mentally exhausted. Just then, the door to the hospital room opened, and people in suits entered.

"Excuse me. Is this Sung Suho's room?"

'Hmm?' He immediately recognized who they were; only one group would be searching for him in this situation.

"We're from the Hunter Association." As expected...

The people in suits approached Suho and bowed.

"Mr. Sung Suho, we want to thank you first."

"Hmm...? What did I do to deserve thanks...?" Suho had a puzzled expression.

"Many people were saved thanks to you, Mr. Suho. We thank you on their behalf."

"Well, it wasn't that big of a deal."

"It was a big deal."

Suddenly.

'Whoa, you surprised me.' The man who seemed to be the highest-ranking among them pushed his face close to Suho's and smiled warmly.

"Mr. Sung Suho, you're truly amazing. A young man risking his life to save others in this harsh world! Sob!"

"Ah, n-no... Excuse me?" The sight of the large man taking out a handkerchief and wiping his tears was too much for Suho.

"Ahem." The employee next to him patted his back as if he was used to it and said,

"Team leader, stop crying and get to work."

"Ah, right. Haha. I've become more tearful with age. Mr. Sung Suho, I am Team Leader Han Jaehyuk of the Hunter Association, and the reason we came here is..." He grinned and held out the bulky mana meter he brought.

"To measure your magic power, Mr. Suho."

There was no doubt that Suho had Awakened. He was found unconscious in the Hankuk University Art Museum, which had become a field-type dungeon. And the area was littered with what appeared to be the remains of magical beasts.

"The reporters are also asking for information to write articles." Han Jaehyuk added with a wink.

"Ah, yes."

Suho put his hand on the mana meter, and the gem embedded in the center emitted a faint light. He waited for a moment, and the measurement results came out.

"Hmm. Ohh, this is..."

Team Leader Han Jaehyuk stroked his chin in surprise after checking the results, but Suho showed no curiosity, his expression remaining unchanged. This lack of reaction was natural, the status window already displayed his magic power right before his eyes.

"Magic power level of 46. You're an E-rank."

The employees next to him were inwardly disappointed, although they didn't show it. They expected a fairly high rank since he was a Hunter who achieved so much as soon as he Awakened. But only E-rank? However, Team Leader Han Jaehyuk was different.

'A Hunter's value isn't determined by their rank. Rather, it's even more amazing that he risked his life to save people despite being an E-rank.' Team Leader Han Jaehyuk smiled warmly and patted Suho's shoulder with his thick hand.

"Mr. Sung Suho, we look forward to your future endeavors."

"Ah, yes."

The Association employees finished their business and left the hospital room with light greetings. And as if on cue, Beru peeked his head out from Suho's shadow.

[Now! I shall explain to you about the future...]

Slide—!

The hospital room door opened again.

"Suho!"

Beru sulked and went back into the shadows.

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Chapter 9: Chapter 08

"Are you feeling better? You were out cold for two whole days!"

The person who entered the hospital room was none other than Teaching Assistant Lim. He examined Suho's complexion as he sat on the bed, and the moment their eyes met, he blurted out an apology.

"I'm sorry... I'm so sorry for running away!"

In that situation, there was nothing an E-rank Hunter could do alone. Their physical abilities weren't much better than those of an ordinary person, so they weren't considered combat power in dungeons. The first lesson that Teaching Assistant Lim learned after awakening as an E-rank was to flee as fast as possible at the sight of a magical beast. But Suho, who was just an ordinary person at the time, was unbelievably heroic.

'To save people until he collapsed in that dangerous place!' Because of those actions, which starkly contrasted with his own, Teaching Assistant Lim felt a level of shame and embarrassment unlike any he had experienced before. However, Suho, who received the apology, remained calm

"It's okay. You don't have to apologize to me."

"No... I have no excuse." Teaching Assistant Lim, still apologizing, took out a warm bowl of porridge from the shopping bag he brought and placed it in front of Suho.

"You must be hungry. Here, have a spoonful of porridge before you eat anything else."

"Oh, what a great sense of timing."

Growl—!

As soon as Suho saw the food, his stomach rumbled loudly. The sesame oil smelled delicious and the color was just right. It was a tasty beef porridge. Suho grabbed the spoon and started eating without hesitation. The first meal he ate in two days was absolutely delicious...

"Do you want me to peel an apple for you?" There was an apple in the fridge. Teaching Assistant Lim had visited the hospital both yesterday and today while Suho was unconscious.

'I'm being taken care of by the department's teaching assistant. I don't feel any pain thanks to leveling up.' Suho was thinking about leaving the hospital today when Teaching Assistant Lim handed him an apple and asked.

"By the way, the people who left the hospital room a while ago were from the Association, right? What did they say?"

"They came to measure my magic power and left."

"Huh? You got it measured? Did you really Awaken?" Teaching Assistant Lim's eyes lit up.

"How much magic power do you have? This dungeon was D-rank, and if you survived there, it must be at least..."

"They said it's E-rank."

"Huh? Really?" Teaching Assistant Lim's eyes widened. Suho unfolded the measurement result paper that the Association employee had left behind.

"Oh, what? Is it really that low? A magic power level of 46 is not a lot even for an E-rank."

"Why are you disappointed? What were you expecting? Wow, that's creepy. Were you trying to gain favor in case I awakened as a high-ranking hunter? That's why you're being so nice to me."

"No, you idiot! If you were to be a high-ranking hunter, you wouldn't have collapsed in that dangerous place! I thought you'd be D-rank at most."

"See? You were thinking about it."

Teaching Assistant Lim jumped, feeling truly wronged. He then put down Suho's result paper and tried comforting him. "I think... It's better this way. E-rank is good, you know? Don't you know that being an E-rank is much more stable than being a mediocre D-rank?"

"I don't know...?"

"Hehe. Of course, you wouldn't be aware. You have just Awakened." Teaching Assistant Lim put his hand on Suho's shoulder with a smug grin.

"Trust me, from now on I'll lead you into the world of E-rank Hunters."

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After being discharged from the hospital, Suho arrived at the Hankuk University Art Museum the next day and listened to Teaching Assistant Lim's explanation.

"In other words, there are a lot of jobs for E-ranks."

Dungeon raids involve a thorough division of labor. The attack team raids the dungeon, followed by the collection team that retrieves the magical beasts' corpses, and finally, the mining team that extracts the resources. E-rank Hunters typically handle all roles except for the attack team itself. Teaching Assistant Lim's assertion that E-rank was much more stable than a mediocre D-rank was accurate. D-rank Hunters, being the weakest members of the attack team, were arguably the most exposed to danger. Conversely, E-ranks, entirely excluded from combat, could earn a daily wage performing manual labor in a safe environment.

"Of course, there are some E-ranks who risk joining the attack team because they need quick money, but it's rare, hospital bills cost a lot... Unless you have a close Healer."

'...I can't believe I'm coming back here again.' Suho looked up at the museum, half destroyed 'because of Beru' and reminisced. The purpose of coming here today was to

become a miner. Excluding the Shadow world, it was his first real dungeon, so he decided to accept Teaching Assistant Lim's help.

"Oh, by the way, the school has switched to online classes until the dungeon is completely cleared. You're going to take a leave of absence since you're a Hunter, right?"

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"Yes, I am. The exhibition is finished, and this semester is almost over anyway."

"Okay. I'll go to the teaching assistant's office later and apply for your Hunter leave of absence. Shall we start now?" Teaching Assistant Lim looked at Suho with eager eyes, exuding the aura of a seasoned veteran.

"Hehe. Today, I'll teach you all about living a wise E-rank Hunter's life! First of all, a miner is...!"

[What a pathetic thing to brag about.] Beru suddenly popped out of Suho's shadow, startling Teaching Assistant Lim and causing him to fall on his butt.

"Huh?!"

"M-magical beast?!"

Beru looked down with contempt and muttered. [Tsk. You're so timid. Young Master, I know much more about what a Hunter is. You should learn from me.]

Then, he flew to Suho and spread his short arms wide shouting majestically.

[A Hunter is a born killer! To slaughter, dominate, and devour the enemy! That is the essence of a Hunter. So please kill and kill again and take all that power... Kuek?] Suho's hand grabbed the muttering Beru like a baseball.

"Why did you suddenly come out?"

[Ahem. I felt the dungeon's energy nearby. The Young Master is as weak as a baby ant, so I have to stay by your side to protect you.]

Stretch—!

As he said that, Beru's body stretched out and slipped from Suho's hand. Then, the tiny ant jumped onto Suho's shoulder and began scanning his surroundings, with a fierce look in his eyes. But Suho wasn't fooled anymore.

'He'll just talk into my ear when I'm fighting.'

Then, Teaching Assistant Lim, who finally came to his senses, carefully pointed at Beru and asked. "Suho, is that a summon?"

[No.] Beru answered firmly. Strictly speaking, he wasn't Suho's summon, but his father's.

"If it's not a summon, then what is it...?" Teaching Assistant Lim, who had already been intimidated by the first confrontation, subconsciously spoke in a polite tone. Beru's eyes flashed fiercely.

[I am a guardian.]

"...Guardian?" Teaching Assistant Lim tilted his head.

[Yes. By human standards... a kind of uncle?]

"...?"

[Hehe. There was a time like that.]

'What was he talking about?'

Beru, who was muttering incomprehensible words, looked at Suho's face with a distant look. Teaching Assistant Lim ignored him and asked Suho directly.

"You Awakened as a summoner?"

"Yes, I guess so."

"Hmm. That's amazing. It's my first time seeing an E-rank summoner." Teaching Assistant Lim kept his real thoughts to himself. There was no need to mention how weak summoning Hunters were. Let alone the combination of an E-rank Hunter and a summoning skill.

'Is he the weakest of the weak?' Teaching Assistant Lim stared at the ant standing on Suho's shoulder. He was surprised when Beru suddenly popped out earlier, but now, looking at his cute appearance, he thought otherwise.

'He's useless...?'

[Those eyes are looking at me disrespectfully. Do you want me to pluck them out?]

"..."

Teaching Assistant Lim lowered his gaze. Still, judging from how quickly the summon noticed, it seemed like he would be good at keeping watch. And since he could even talk, he might be useful.

"Ahem. Well, there are many E-rank Hunters without skills, so you're lucky. For your information, I have a running skill."

"Aha... That's why you ran away so fast."

"..."

Suho's innocent remark slightly offended Teaching Assistant Lim. It hurt even more because it was true.

* * *

Just like that, Suho became a miner at Teaching Assistant Lim's recommendation.

"Alright! Let's do our best today!" The mining team, composed of E-rank Hunters, gave off the vibe of a construction site crew.

"Here, newbie! Come and get your pickaxe."

Thud!

The pickaxe was placed in Suho's hand, then the man who handed it out smiled at him and said,

"If it breaks while you're working, come back to me and get another one. But the cost will be deducted from your pay, so be careful. Still, you're a young man... Wait, that's weird, you are a student at this school, right?"

"Wow, are you 'that guy'?" Surprisingly, most of the miners recognized Suho and spoke to him first.

'It's because of that news report.' Suho recalled the news he saw yesterday and this morning, smiling bitterly. Was the headline 'Hankuk University's Hero Becomes E-rank Hunter' ? It was an ambiguous title, whether it was praise or criticism. If he had become the hero of the art museum as an ordinary person, he would have received a Brave Citizen Award, but because he Awakened in the middle, it became a Hunter doing a Hunter's job. But... he was the lowest rank Hunter, so it was an ambiguous situation for others. Even so, it seemed to work in his favor with these men.

"Huh. That's a shame. If you were going to Awaken anyway, it would have been life-changing if you got a rank or two higher."

"But don't be too disappointed about your low rank~ We're also living well."

"That's right, that's right. It's a bit tough on the body, but you don't need any special skills, just swing the pickaxe well, how great is that?"

They were eager to give Suho advice, saying it was the first time in a while that a decent newbie had joined. But Beru really hated this heartwarming atmosphere.

[My liege, let's go level up instead of chatting with these ignorant fools. It's a waste of time.]

"Oh! Is this a summon?"

"Wow. I've never seen anything like this before."

"It would be cute to carry around."

"But it's too small to be useful for mining, isn't it?"

The miners gathered, curious about the summon that suddenly appeared. Beru glared at them and unleashed his killing intent.

[Hey! Don't come any closer, you rude bastards! Our liege is a delicate person, he could die if you touch him! Don't worry, my liege. I'll protect you!]

"...?"

Suho stared at Beru, wondering if this was doting or just nagging.

"Hahaha. What a reliable summon."

"Alright, let's get to work."

The miners laughed at Beru's 'cuteness' and scattered with their pickaxes. Suho suddenly had a good idea as he watched them.

"Beru."

[Yes, my liege. Just give the order, and I'll behead those disrespectful bastards.]

"Don't behead them..."

[Then what are your orders?]

"Bring some goblin corpses from the Shadow Dungeon."

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[Yes!]

Beru, responding to Suho's command, asked back in bewilderment.

[But to kill those disrespectful fools, shouldn't we attack from behind?]

"What are you talking about? We're going to mine."

[...!]

Beru jumped, sputtering in protest.

[Wh-what are you talking about!] He couldn't believe it. What on earth was going on! The power of the great and almighty Shadow Monarch. Oh how incredible that ability was. and suho was going to use it for mere mining!

[Right now, in outer space, there's a war going on with an army of hundreds of millions, and you're talking about mining!]

"I know that, but the extent of my power right now is only 3 weak goblins. We have to be realistic. I'm sure Dad probably did something like this when he was weak, too."

[B-but....]

"And you said it yourself last night." Suho recalled the conversation he had with Beru yesterday.

* * *

The previous day, on the way home after being discharged from the hospital. Beru said with a serious expression,

[Young Master, our mission can be summarized in three points.] For a guy his size, his words were quite grandiose.

[First. We must protect Earth from the magical beasts of outer space.]

"You mean go into dungeons and hunt magical beasts?"

[Yes. As you hunt magical beasts, your level will gradually increase, and the stronger the Young Master becomes, the safer Earth will be. And second, we must somehow find Lady Hae-In, who is missing.]

"Right. Do you have any idea where Mother might be?"

[Unfortunately, I do not. But if we keep catching the outer space beasts, wouldn't we get a clue somehow?]

In the end, this also meant going into dungeons.

[And third. This is the most important.] Beru's eyes flashed as he pointed at himself.

[I need to regain my strength as soon as possible and return to the battlefield where my Liege is waiting. With a key force like me missing, the balance of the tense war must have become precarious.]

At this point, Suho was curious. Beru's shrunken appearance was just a way to conserve his strength, but his original form and power were that of a living nightmare itself. He couldn't even imagine how the course of the war would change if such a tremendous force was missing.

"How do you regain your strength?"

At Suho's question, Beru's lips curled into a wide grin.

[By eating, of course.]

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It was a most wicked and sinister smile.

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Long ago. In a world now forgotten. The queen of the ants decided.

- Let's make the strongest soldier.

The queen needed the strongest soldier to rebuild her collapsing kingdom, brought down by humans, and to lead her people. And so, for half a year. She gathered all her magic power and nutrients to conceive a single life. The queen's single-minded desire to create a strong soldier, combined with the primordial command to exterminate all humans, resulted in the birth of a monstrous creature beyond common sense. Thanks

to the innate skill 'Predation' the monster could make a portion of the target's magic power and knowledge its own simply by consuming it.

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...Recalling that old memory, Beru said,

[My innate talent is 'Predation'. Whether it's humans or magical beasts, if I keep eating, my strength will gradually be restored. It's an inefficient method used in the old days, but there's no other choice now.]

Human or magical beasts...? Suho felt it anew. Beru definitely lacked humanity.

'No... He was never human in the first place.' Beru's appearance, drooling as he talked about eating people, was that of a terrifying magical beast itself.

Suho said firmly, "Still, don't eat just any human."

[Hhhh...?]

"If you have to, eat only bad people." At those words, Beru's eyes narrowed.

[As expected, like father, like son. You say the same thing as the Master. Long ago, my Liege also commanded me to eat only villains.]

"Father did too? What's the standard for a villain?"

[Of course, it's...] Beru smiled faintly.

[Those who harm our Young Master.]

* * *

They were back to the task at hand.

"Remember, that's what you said." At Suho's words, Beru protested.

[Of course... So, shouldn't we go into the dungeon and level up now?]

"No... How can an E-rank Hunter go into a dungeon alone? I can't join an attack team, you know?" Suho was extremely practical. As Teaching Assistant Lim had explained, the only role an E-rank Hunter could play in a dungeon was that of a laborer. If his level increased later and his magic power reached D-rank, he planned to get 're-evaluated'.

'Since the Hunter ranking system was established recently, there are still many errors in the measuring devices.'

"So for now, let's just do what we can." Suho said with a smirk.

At that smile, Beru suddenly felt a chill.

[Why are you smiling at me like that?]

"Our third mission." Suho, with a meaningful expression, repeated Beru's words.

"To recharge your mana as soon as possible. By... eating, right?"

[Th-that's right. Whether it's humans or magical beasts...]

"Then what about Mana Crystals?" At those words, Beru's expression stiffened.

"If your ability is Predation, wouldn't you be able to recharge your mana by eating Mana Crystals?"

[Th-that... is true, but Mana Crystals contain a very small amount of mana, so they're not very efficient...]

"Is that a problem? Just eat more of them." Suho said with a bright smile.

"We can get them for free if we pick them up here."

[Kieeee...] Beru let out a deflated groan.

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Suho passed through the Gate with the miners, finding the dungeon's appearance drastically different from the Shadow Dungeon. Instead of a vast, ruined city, this was a winding cave, and with everyone holding pickaxes, it truly felt like a mine. Suho and the miners slowly moved into the dungeon. The interior wasn't very dark, illuminated by glowing mushrooms and moths growing throughout.

Clang! Clang! Clang! Clang!

The noises of pickaxes striking rock started coming from everywhere. The miners were experienced, so the clacking was very consistent and rhythmic. But suddenly, all those sounds stopped...

"...Huh?"

"What's that?" The miners' gazes focused on one spot. There, Suho was ordering around the Shadow Goblins.

[Keruk!]

[Kerutuk!]

[Kihihit!]

Three Shadow Goblins, making evil and sinister laughter, were swinging pickaxes. The sight of those strange creatures, controlled by Suho from behind, was bizarre.

"Wow."

"That's what his summoning skill is...?"

People were surprised, and that was understandable. Commonly known summoning skills were used to summon things like 'Exploding Bugs' or 'Sleep Butterflies' to assist in combat. And the summoner would just follow behind, like a Pokémon trainer, giving directions.

"But how can he use it like that?"

Clang, Clang, Clang, Clang!

[Kihehehek!]

The Shadow Goblins Suho controlled were a bit smaller and weaker than ordinary goblins. But they had enough strength to swing pickaxes, and most importantly, they never got tired. Even if their stamina dropped a little, magic power flowed from Suho to recharge them.

"Wow... this, this."

"This newbie is really something! Hahaha!" The miners, seeing Suho's performance, chattered and praised him.

"The talk about summoning skills being useless was all nonsense! Look at how good this is!"

"If we're not careful, this newbie will mine everything alone!"

"We can't let that happen! Let's show the power of the seniors!" The miners laughed heartily and started swinging their pickaxes with renewed intensity. The sight of them working right next to the tiny goblins was quite amusing.

[You vermin...] Beru, watching that heartwarming scene from behind, chewed on Mana Crystals like cookies.

* * *

Meanwhile,

The attack team, consisting of D-rank or higher Hunters, was raiding a much deeper part of the dungeon.

"This dungeon is really empty."

"Yeah. We've only seen wolf magical beasts the whole time."

"Wolf pelts aren't worth much."

The collection team, following behind the attack squad and dismantling the magical beast corpses, smacked their lips in disappointment. Of course, even though they said that, wolf pelts weren't completely worthless. Moreover, there were occasionally corpses that contained Essence Stones, so they had to work hard.

"Sigh. We need to make a living." The wolf pelts were piled up on the cart they brought. But then...

"Huh? What's this?" A Hunter who was leading the way through the cave called out to his colleagues. In front of them, a huge ruin had been erected. The Hunters, seeing that, tensed up and scanned their surroundings.

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'Could there be a boss-level magical beast?' Typically, there was a low probability of a powerful boss monster appearing in a D-rank dungeon. But the existence of such a structure meant that something special could happen. And that specialness was unlikely to be a pleasant situation for the Hunters.

"What is this?"

"Why is there a ruin here?"

"Should we go outside and ask for more support?" The Hunters whispered quietly. But the leader of the attack team, mediating them, looked around with a cautious expression.

"Shh. Be quiet. There's no sign of any magical beasts caught by my detection skill."

"Really? There are no magical beasts, so why is there this structure here?"

"We'll have to figure that out." A faint smile appeared on the leader's lips.

"Who knows? Maybe there's treasure hidden inside, instead of a boss monster."

"Treasure...!" At those words, the Hunters' eyes changed.

It wasn't just the corpses of magical beasts and Mana Crystals that could be obtained from dungeons. Some artefacts could be found with a very low probability. Those items were the only way for Hunters, whose rank was fixed once they awakened, to increase their power.

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"Captain! There's something here!"

The group discovered a weapon stuck in the center of the ruins. It was an unusual-looking sword, which radiated an eerie aura.

"What do we have here?" The eyes of the hunters simultaneously filled with greed.

"We've hit the jackpot!"

"Wow, it's a weapon!"

While it was hard to tell without taking it outside and testing its properties, by the looks of it, it seemed like they had discovered an impressive weapon.

"Captain! Let me take it out!" The strongest hunter stepped forward, spitting on both hands.

"Huh? Wait, Yongjun! Handle it with care...!" The captain tried to stop him, but his hand was already firmly gripping the sword's hilt. As he tried pulling it out, Kim Yongjun suddenly heard a booming voice in his head.

- Who dares to covet the Fang Monarch's sword.