

Ark Vol 10 C 7

Chapter 7

ACT 7 Galgin Clan's Disaster

Kuaaaang!

A loud roar rattled the forest. It looked like a Kurun but with 3 heads, a monster with 5 tails called the 'Chimera-Kurometin.' Level 250. There was a group of 4 or 5 monsters. They had high defense and attack so they were the toughest opponent he's faced so far, but he had become accustomed to their attack patterns after fighting them a few times. Although it was a little difficult in the daytime, once he had the dark attribute bonus then Ark could easily take care of it. But Ark didn't use his skills and just raised his voice.

"Plan A-3. Lariette-nim, lure two and take them out."

"Huh? Yes! Holy bolt, Holy bolt!"

Lariette attacked two of them with holy magic. However, only one of the monsters moved and chased after her. Then Dedric who had been sitting on her shoulder started lecturing her.

"How many times do I have to say it? Are you stupid? Distance is important when you are trying to lure! Even if you too far away when you 'taunt' then it won't work properly!"

"B-but it's too scary....."

"What? Are you kidding right now? Are you a princess? You're afraid of hitting a monster while holding a sword? You're too much trouble. Are you scared of hitting with your sword? Is that what you're saying? Don't use magic! Only use your sword and shield!"

"U-understood."

"Ah, what are you doing? Move closer to the monster! Sword, sword! Shield, shield!"

Dedric continually harassed Lariette.

‘That guy.....he’s acting like this again. Well, that’s why I entrusted it to him.’

Ark gave a wry smile after hearing the noisy Dedric. He had trained Lariette for a few days. In the meantime, Lariette had improved a lot as a knight. She could use recovery magic and attack the monsters from the rear. However, she still hadn’t met Ark’s standards.

‘Well, using a sword and shield is not something that can be learned overnight.....’

Yes, Lariette had the same issue as Isyuram. If she started the game as a knight, then she would’ve naturally learned the necessary skills to use a sword and shield. However, she suddenly became a completely different class at level 160 with no previous skills and knowledge. She could only use the holy magic exclusive skills of an Innocence Knight. Common skills such as Sword Mastery would have to be taught by mercenary NPCs after they were paid. But Ark was kind (?). After teaching her some tips, she was able to learn some warrior exclusive skills.

‘She has to adapt to fighting in a party in order to truly become useful.’

Of course, Lariette had participated in party teamwork with the Dawn Blade members. But her role was different as she was a magician. In addition, the Dawn Blade members always hunted with dozens of people. Even if one or two people failed in their roles then it wouldn’t be a problem. In a small party with 3~4 people, even one person could affect the battle. Fortunately, Lariette had a clear head.

‘I remember the basic plans.....but as expected, there are numerous variables in an actual battle. I have to have a broader view in order to learn every formation.’

So Ark determined what he should train Lariette in. Ark taught her how to use a shield, Razak tips on dealing with a shield and sword, and the tactical combat was left to Dedric to teach Lariette.

...It was an excellent choice.

In fact, Dedric had become slightly depressed after Ark succeeded in re-education and forcing him on a diet. But after receiving the number 2 position and being entrusted with the 'tactics,' his mood and loyalty rose once again. His chatter was also more bearable than before and didn't annoy Ark as much.

"Oh, it's really crazy. Are you stupid? How many times do I have to tell you? Didn't I tell you not to move too far when luring? There may be other monsters in the vicinity. Will you shoulder the responsibility if other monsters attack and the party dies? Invite the monster and lead them around a small area!"

Dedric once again spoke roughly to a woman.

"You idiot, I told you not to do that! You have to maintain a distance that allows you to use recovery magic on your allies! Are you going to just blindly use magic? Is that acceptable? Your group might end up eaten. Ayu, hey Razak, time for a demonstration!"

Clack clack clack clack, daeng kang!

Razak pushed the Kurometin with his shield. Dedric nodded and said.

"Did you see? Take one step and then push! Okay?"

"Huk huk huk, u-understood. I'll give it a try."

"Do it right this time."

Dedric picked his nose and continued harassing her.

'It is crude but more effective than me teaching her.'

Thanks to that, Lariette gradually learned her role in the group.

'Now, should I finish it for the moment since Lariette is tired?'

“Dedric, Razak, gather all of them in one place.”

Clack clack clack clack!

“Okay! Watch carefully trainee. I’ll show you how to lure!”

Dedric displayed dazzling skills and lured the Kurometin straight towards Ark. Razak also gathered around the monsters and used Shield Stroke. It was like dressing up a table for Ark.....and he continuously used Flash.

Kwa kwa kwa kwang!

The flash of light moved around the Kurometin like a spider web and their health gradually decreased. When the Kurometin fell into a critical condition, Ark and Lariette finished it off. After the Kurometin died, Ark commanded in a hurry.

“Radun, swallow the items quickly!”

Ssak ssak ssak ssak!

Radun shot off like an arrow and swallowed the items without checking it. Meanwhile Ark didn’t relax and kept on looking around.

‘Phew.....fortunately it hasn’t appeared yet.....’

Ark gave a sigh of relief. Then a cross pattern appeared on top of Lariette’s head who screamed.

“Another level up! Kyaaa, I also got the ‘Shield Block’ skill!”

But the severe tactics training continued even now.

“What’s the point of an uproar when you made so many mistakes? The techniques are not as easy as you thought!”

Dedric declared sharply causing Lariette to flinch and close her mouth. Then, Ark smiled and said in a friendly voice.

“No. In my view you’ve gotten a lot better. Although you still have the habit of relying on magic in a fight, if you fix that then you’ll be a proper knight.”

“It’s all thanks to Ark-nim.”

Lariette blushed at Ark’s compliment.

“Bah, you’re still a shameful knight. You’re not there yet!”

“Stop it, Dedric. I can see that your skill handling a sword is very good.”

Lariette’s face had darkened at Dedric’s words and now it brightened after Ark spoke. It was the carrot and stick! That was the secret reason behind Lariette’s quick progress.

“Let’s take a break and recover our mana.”

Ark made a campsite and collected the corpses of the Kurometin. He took out the ‘Butcher’s Knife’ and began to separate the meat and leather. After finishing those actions, Ark surveyed the area with a worried eye like when Radun collected the items.

‘Damn, I never thought a monster could make me so nervous.’

Annoyance showed in Ark's eyes. It had been a week after they left the valley village.....they finally arrived at their destination, the Forest of Life yesterday evening. If it was just Ark, he would've arrived at the destination a long time ago. But Lariette was an office worker so she couldn't access the game during the day. Whenever she disconnected, he would make a campsite and spend the time hunting in the vicinity.

'Well, there is no urgency at the moment.'

It was taking longer than he expected but he wasn't that impatient. There were many reasons why and one of them was that the monsters here gave quite good experience.

Character Name Ark Race Human Alignment Good +400 Fame 9,125 (+ 500) Level 269 Profession Dark Walker Title Cat Knight, Caretaker of the Abandoned, Jackson's Hero, Great Adventurer Health 4,111 (+150) Mana 4,250 Spiritual Power 200 Strength 543 (+28) Agility 703 (+55) Stamina 773 (+20) Wisdom 107 (+10) Intelligence 822 Luck 103 (+30) Flexibility 107 Art of Communication 46 Affection 152 (+10) Resilience 305 Special stat: Knowledge of Ancient Relics 138 * Equipment item effects Guardian Armour of the Merpeople: Water Attribute Resistance +100%, Penalty based on water is nullified.

Cat Paws (Gloves): Attack Speed +10%, Agility +15, Critical Hit +10%

Raccoons Pith (Helmet): Agility + 10, Wisdom + 10

* Set effect: Strength + 10, Agility + 10, Stamina +10, Defense +20

Warrior's Transcripts (Shoulder Blades): Strength + 3

Wind Spirit's Boots (Shoes): Agility + 30, Movement Speed +30%, Attack Speed +10%, 'Slide' available

Galgashi's Fur (Mantle): Cold resistance +100%, Agility +20, When health is less than 50%, 'Magic Protection' automatically activates.

Adelaine's Necklace (Necklace): Defense + 40, Affection +10, 'Blessing of the Sea' available

Resurrecting Spirit (Ring): Strength + 5, Mana recovery + 5%

Rarukan's Ring (Ring): Agility + 10, Attack Speed +10%, Critical Hit +8%, 'Dark Protection' available

Amulet of Vitality (Bracelet): Health + 50, Health recovers by 5 every 20 seconds

Gladiator's Honour (Bracelet): Strength, Agility, Stamina +10, Fame +500, Sword-based Skill Growth +5%

- * All abilities will increase by 40% in the dark

- * You have the ability to hide in the darkness (20 minutes duration. Cancelled when you get into combat)

- * Resistance to Fear, Darkness, Blind, and Seduction spells is increased by 50%.

- * You can bring out the true abilities from all types of tools.

- * Shock absorption is increased by 20%.

- * Poison resistance has increased by 50%.

- * 10% increased attack and defense

He gained 13 levels in a week. Lariette could only play 6 hours a day but still managed to gain 8 levels to reach 170. In New World, there was a penalty on experience gained if there was a large level difference between party members, with the penalty depending on how much the difference is.

‘The number of monsters and experience is acceptable. The speed is similar to levelling up in a dungeon.’

Ark quite liked the Forest of Life. Except for one type of monster.....

-You have succeeded in gathering ‘Kurometin Leather’ using Leather Extraction.

Thanks to his steady efforts, his Leather Extraction skill had reached the intermediate level. But the success rate of leather extraction on level 250 monsters was only 5%.

The effect of ‘Sacred Branch’ raised it to 15%.

Although it was a habit, he hadn’t expected the result. However, Ark’s face had a rushed expression instead of the normal look of joy.

‘Huk, it is coming to take the soul away!’

Ark packed the leather in his bag and grabbed his sword. At that time, he heard the sound of rustling leaves coming from the forest.

‘That bastard, you were hiding nearby!’

Ark glared with blazing eyes filled with anger at the dark forest. After a while, he heard the rustling sound of something moving away. It was definitely that guy! The monster who made Ark’s blood tremble in fear!

‘I never thought there would be a tough monster like that.’

Ark had only seen it two or three times. But it was the first time Ark had sensed that the monster would be a threat to him. The monster was called the ‘Chimera=Bandit Fox.’

It was a thief fox..... Those guys hid themselves using 'Protective Colouration' and appeared out of nowhere to steal his items before running away. They had even managed to intercept him when Ark was holding the items. In addition, their speed was so fast that he wasn't able to catch them using 'Sprint.'

"There are also monsters like that...."

His obsession with the burglar fox was so much that even Dedric held his tongue. So Ark made sure that Radun swallowed the items as soon as the battle ended. Radun was responsible for collecting the items so it especially disliked the Bandit Fox.

'Damn!'

Ark cursed whenever he sensed them. Anyway, if he was careful then the Bandit Fox would have no chance of stealing his items. The problem was that there were ingredients scattered all over the Forest of Life. Just like its name, the Forest of Life was a place where lush greenery grew. There were a wide variety of plants that could be used as food ingredients.....and that was the real reason why he hated the Bandit Foxes. Even though Ark searched the Forest of Life, he only managed to collect 3~4 ingredients. Every time a food ingredient popped up, it would be devoured by the foxes.

'It is impossible to catch the Bandit Foxes inside this forest.....'

He had tried to catch them. However, whenever he got close they would use 'Protective Colouration' which was similar to Stealth. And the problem wouldn't be solved by catching one or two. Who knew how many thousands of Bandit Foxes there were?

'It is impossible. I just have to collect it first before the foxes discover it.'

"Okay, let's go. It is time for Ingredient Foraging."

Ark ordered while Buksil and Lariette stood up with a sigh.

"Now, Lariette-nim will search around here while Buksil will search to the north."

“But what if the thieves have already collected everything and we find nothing. I would rather use that time to search for the laboratory. The Forest of Life is quite wide so wouldn’t it take a long time to walk around the whole thing?”

“You never know.”

Ark replied in a stern voice to Buksil’s complaint.

“There might be ingredients hard to collect because they’re foxes.”

“Hah.....I think we have enough ingredients.....”

“Food is plentiful now but there is no guarantee what will happen in the future. Think about it. I’ve already faced a situation when I’ve been exhausted from hunger. But did I just give up? I can’t let them take away what is ours. It is too vexing!”

“We’re not like Ark-nim.....”

Buksil murmured with dissatisfaction but started searching the forest when Ark glared at him.

“We have to scrape as much as possible!”

Ark used those reasons and forced the two of them into manual labour. But all they got for their efforts was back pain. How much time had passed?

“Kyaaa, what, what the? Huk, go away!”

Lariette screamed from a short distance away. Ark flinched and swung his sword in Lariette’s direction. Then she came screaming out of the forest with something wrapped around her head.

“Hik, s-stop! Don’t hit me!”

'Eh? That guy is.....?'

The person hanging onto Lariette was an acquaintance (?). It was an NPC resembling a bug. It was Reid, the Galgin peddler he rescued from the Predator the other day. Lariette had mistaken him for an insect type monster.

"Lariette-nim, wait a minute!"

Ark stood in front of Lariette and blocked her. Reid moved his head away and saw Ark.

"Y-you are?"

"It is Ark. We met once before."

"Oh, running into someone I know in a place like this.....God is really helping me. Help me!"

His eyes were brimming with tears as he spoke.

"Don't worry. I'm not going to attack anymore."

Ark looked at Lariette and smiled bitterly. The one who had turned pale with fear was Lariette. Of course someone like her would be scared of an insect like creature. In fact, it was the first time he had seen Lariette truly having an urge to kill. But Reid just shook his antennae and said.

"No, no. It's not that. My entire family is clan is about to die."

"Huh? Clan?"

Reid explained the situation while crying.

“You know that we are peddlers. When an adult starts peddling, they don’t get to meet their family that often. So it a tradition to designate a place to travel to and meet once a month. The reason I was in the vicinity before was because this forest had been designated as the meeting place. Then.....then.....yesterday I’ve arrived at the meeting place and everybody was suffering.”

“Suffering?”

“Yes, all of them are dying. I hastily made several medicines but it had no effect. It’s obviously a mysterious disease. Although they are sick, they’re still holding on to their lives..... So I started searching for people who could help. Do you have ways to treat such diseases? Middle earth should have advanced techniques to cure diseases. You’re from middle earth.”

“.....”

Ark turned and looked at Lariette. It should be a technique similar to ‘Disease Recovery.’ After Lariette changed to an Innocence Knight, she happened to learn ‘Disease Recovery.’ But Lariette had an uneasy expression and said in a worried voice.

“Ah, Ark-nim. Are we really going to help this insect?”

Of course he would help. Why? In order to get a reward.

‘Isn’t Reid’s family the Galgin clan of peddlers? Well, they might not have that much but I might be able to get some items for my summons from Reid.’

It was difficult to obtain items in the Netherworld. There were only two or three bartering shops in the valley village. There were items like the ‘Umma’s Sap’ but the number was quite restricted. But this was a gathering of peddlers. The opportunity to take advantage of such a department store couldn’t be missed. Ark replied with a serious expression.

“Lariette-nim, although he looks like an insect Reid is still a resident of the Netherworld. The heart which regards their family is not that different from ours. But if we ignore a patient just because of their looks then isn’t it discrimination?”

Lariette gasped at Ark's speech.

"Thank you, I never expected that you would regard the Galgin clan like that!"

'This bastard insect, why is he holding my hands? I'll have to use some hand disinfectant.'

It was impossible for Ark to like being touched by an insect. Anyway, he just had to pretend for the moment.

"B-but....."

"I believe that Lariette-nim is not one of those people."

Ark looked at Lariette with a trusting expression. After looking at Reid's eyes, she couldn't bear to refuse even if she felt disgusted.

"Phew, I understand."

'Huhuhuhu, another free quest!'

Ark inwardly grinned wickedly. An Innocence Knight had various kinds of recovery magic so it should be settled without any difficulty. When they accepted, a message window appeared in front of Ark and Lariette.

Galgin Clan's Disaster

After a month, Reid and the other peddlers in his clan met in the Forest of Life. But when Reid arrived, his clan was suffering from an unknown disease. Help identify the cause of the disease.

'They are still cockroaches.'

After a while, Reid guided Ark towards the meeting place. When they arrived there, he noticed that they were plenty of cockroaches gathered. Just like the name suggested, the Forest of Life was a forest full of vitality. When walking around, there was plenty of lush greenery and warm sun. But the place where the Galgin were gathered had a sombre atmosphere. There were rotting trees everywhere with the Galgin scattered around. Just like Reid said, the situation seemed quite serious.

"Ooooh, c-cold....somebody....."

"Mama, Mama.....stomach hurts.....sob....."

"Huk.....my guts are twisted....."

There was the sound of moaning everywhere. Some of the cockroaches had viscous liquid seeping from their arms and legs while others were vomiting. The terribly sick appearance of the Galgin clan made Lariette pale and she hid behind Ark in terror. When he arrived at the camp, the Galgin was in tears.

"Great-grandfather, great-grandmother, grandfather, aunt, uncle, cousins....!"

All of the cockroaches were Reid's family. Yes, they really couldn't ignore the proliferative capacity of the cockroaches.

"Darling, my sons!"

Reid went crazy and ran towards his family.

"D-Daddy.....It hurts."

“Ooh, really? Don’t worry though. Believe in your father. I found someone to help you. Those people will surely make you feel better.”

Ark looked at Reid with a stupid expression.

.....He had a wife and children? Anyway, Reid’s wife.....the cockroach struggled to raise her body.

“P-please.....no matter what happens to me, my children.....”

“What are you saying? You should never give up!”

Reid ran to her and embraced her.

“You have to live no matter what. So you should never give up!”

“Darling.....”

Uhh, it was truly a moving scene. If only they weren’t cockroaches.

‘In reality, I’ve killed plenty of cockroaches every day and they keep on multiplying.... Well, that would solve the problem but.....’

Ark could even be kind to cockroaches for a quest.

“Don’t worry, you will soon regain your health.”

“Ohh, Ark, Ark! Please.”

Reid clung to Ark and begged.

“Yes, it is my mission.”

Ark looked at Lariette quickly while talking. In fact, there was nothing that Ark could do. Ark's only healing skill was Nursing. But Nursing was only an auxiliary skill. It was possible to extend the life but it couldn't treat illness. On the other hand, the Innocence Knight's 'Cure Disease' was magic to treat illnesses. Lariette hesitated before walking towards the cockroaches. She seemed a little bit afraid but spread her hands and chanted.

“Holy God, please get rid of the illnesses that dwell in this body. Cure disease!”

The body of the cockroach was engulfed in a white light.

‘Huhuhu, it's over. Now what reward will I get?’

Ark was celebrating. Then Reid unexpectedly shook his antenna and said.

“.....What is this? There's no change.”

“Yes, the disease is....huh? What is this?”

“Look at the eyes. I don't know what you did but there was no effect.”

The symptoms of the female cockroach didn't improve at all. The body remained the same and there was no sign that the health recovered at all. Lariette had a puzzled expression.

“I-it should have worked.....have you perhaps been cursed? Remove Curse!”

But the result was the same. She tried all sorts of cure diseases, release curse and even buffs but the state did not change. Meanwhile, the symptoms seemed to be worsening as they started gasping for breaths. Ark was distressed and used Nursing.

“Find your energy. Will the Galgin clan of the Netherworld be taken out this easily? You shouldn’t collapse in a place like this because of some disease.”

The ‘Nursing’ had an effect. The complexion of the cockroach eased slightly. When Lariette used recovery magic in this state, the health that had dropped to the bottom was restored. But that was the only thing that happened. The combination of ‘Nursing’ and recovery magic could only slow down the disease but nothing more.

‘What the hell? They’re ill but why does the treatment to cure diseases not work?’

For the moment, Ark and Lariette went around the campsite and recovered their health using Nursing and recovery magic. However, the fact that the cockroaches were still hurting was troubling. There were too many and it took one hour to recover to help all the cockroaches. The crisis had been averted for the moment. If Ark used Nursing appropriately then they shouldn’t die. But it was just a temporary solution.

“What now?”

Lariette looked around restlessly. She shook her head and sighed.

“Maybe it’s because my skills are only at the beginner level. I don’t use ‘Cure Disease’ or ‘Remove curse’ that often. But I have no more skill points.....”

She transferred her gaze to Ark. Ark couldn’t think of a good idea. If he used Nursing then he could prevent the illness from proceeding. But he couldn’t just stay here to extend the lives of the cockroaches forever. Even if he stayed until Lariette’s ‘Cure Disease’ skill reached intermediate, he would’ve invested too much time into this quest.

‘I have to give up this quest.’

Ark sighed and shook his head.

“I’m really sorry. We can’t do any more.”

“Ah, ah, Ark! Ah, don’t. It’s a request. A bit more, a bit more! There must be some way. Do you understand? I don’t have the time to find somebody else. If you give up then my family will die. Anything is good. I’ll do whatever you want but please don’t give up!”

Reid cried and hung onto him. He really had tried everything. He also wanted to complete the quest for the reward. Wasn’t that why he had spent an hour using Nursing? But what was he supposed to do now? Ark started to become annoyed at the insistent cries.

“Stop it. Can’t you see that there is no way to solve this?”

.....It was at that time.

He suddenly felt goose-bumps all over his body and sat down.

‘What the? This feeling is.....?’

Ark felt perplexed at these incomprehensible feelings. Why had he suddenly felt so uneasy? While Ark was looking at Reid, he suddenly recalled a surprisingly memory. He suddenly realised why he felt so unpleasant as he thought back to the past!

-We did our best.

-There is nothing more we can do.

-You should prepare your heart for the worst.

The voices rang inside his head like thunder. Yes, those were all words that Ark had heard from other peoples’ mouths. The doctors had said those words when his mother was in the ICU. It was like that. They said so. Their faces had no sign of apology or pity as they straight up told Ark. As long as they received money, it was not their responsibility.....they seemed like they had no interest in the subject as they spoke about death so easily.

Did the doctors have any idea of the despair they made Ark feel then? The despair of that still was still like a cold knives stuck in his heart. He would sometimes wake up from nightmares of that event. When his mother recovered, he had somewhat forgotten about that incident but now it was ignited again in his heart.

‘But now.....’

Now he was talking with the same voice and expression as those doctors. His eyes showed no concern about the Galgin’s lives. The only emotion he felt was regret that the quest couldn’t be completed. He had talked so easily about his family’s death in front of Reid.

Ark became disillusioned with himself. Whether it was a game or reality wasn’t important.

‘The important thing.....I know the pain too well.....yet I dared to say such words so casually. It was me, not other people.....’

Then Lariette spoke to Reid in a tearful voice.

“You know, Ark-nim tried his best. But there is nothing we can do.”

Ark interrupted in a low voice.

“.....I haven’t finished.”

“Huh? Ark-nim?”

“I.....still haven’t tried my best.”

“What are you saying.....?”

Ark kneeled beside Reid and took his hand.

“That’s right. You are correct. Reid. I haven’t tried my best yet. Honestly, I can’t give you a definite answer on whether I can cure the disease. I don’t know if I can cure it. But I promise. I will never give up. Let’s work together.”

Yes, these words! They were the words Ark wanted to hear when he was in the ICU. Dangerous. He might have to prepare his heart..... Ark didn’t want to hear those words.

He stood in front of the ICU doors all night waiting to hear the right ones.....he just wanted to hear a sincere word. Anyone was fine. Even if it wasn’t the surgeon, a resident who was there for training would’ve been fine. He just wanted someone to have more interest in his mother. If that happen....Ark wouldn’t think that the hospital was a place that devoured money.

“Ah, but Ark-nim.....”

Ark replied in a decisive voice.

“I’m really sorry. I know that Lariette-nim is uncomfortable. But I’m not going to abandon them. I will hold their hands even if they become corpses.”

Lariette was puzzled by Ark’s firm attitude. But she smiled strangely after a brief moment and nodded.

“I.....what should be done?”

“It is ineffective but please continue to use Cure Disease. If it really is because Cure Disease is too low then you have no choice but to raise the proficiency. I will continue to use Nursing while investigating a different direction.”

“Yes, I understand.”

So began a fierce fight against a disease.

