

Ark Vol 11 C 9

Chapter 9

ACT 9 Truth of the World Trees

“A remarkable event took place in Selebrid a few days ago!”

He heard an excited voice as soon as he turned on the TV. It was the voice of the female reporter in charge of the game scoops. It was the weekly corner that dealt with events in New World. This week the corner was on the monsters attacking Selebrid. The male reporter was an actual gamer and described it with a serious expression.

“As everybody knows, Selebrid is the capital city of the Schudenberg Kingdom where most users started. A large number of guards are concentrated around the palace, in the city and even in the suburbs. As a comparison, not even a dragon would be able to break into Selebrid.”

“But didn’t an event which tore apart common sense occur?”

“That’s right. Surprisingly dozens of monsters managed to break into Selebrid.”

“Let’s see the footage.”

Soon after the screen changed and the Selebrid square appeared. There were merchants leisurely strolling the streets, lovers dating in front of the fountain, people enjoying a nap on the benches....it was indeed a peaceful scene. But at that moment, an area in the square distorted and a gate appeared. And dozens of monsters with terrifying appearances exited.

“Ugh, w-where is this?”

“There are foreigners. So many foreigners....!”

“All of them are enemies. Kill!”

The monsters looked around and began to wildly attack the users. Fortunately, the emergency signal went off and the guards were able to handle the mobs with no problems. However it left a deep wound in Selebrid who prided themselves on not allowing monsters to invade. The screen returned to the studio.

“A truly shocking scene. What is going on?”

“It’s difficult to say at the moment. The senior magicians immediately mobilized after the incident to investigate the gate but no official announcement has been made. I can only guess that the gate the monsters came through is connected to another dimension.”

The female reporter asked with a surprised expression.

“A different dimension? Other dimensions exist in New World?”

“Of course. Although it hasn’t be officially announced by the publishers, typically users know that there are several dimensions including middle earth.”

“That’s right. That must be why so many users are interested in this incident.”

“Yes, so far there have only been rumours but the different dimensions were confirmed for the first time. Opinions are also mixed on whether this might cause another Event Quest like the one in Jackson. But the production company Global Exos.....”

Hyun-woo never expected that it would appear on TV. Hyun-woo was the main cause for the monsters attacking Selebrid. While facing Duke in the woods near the valley village, he had created the dimensional gate using the Dimensional Movement Powder to get rid of the Nakujuk. Yes, that exit for that gate was Selebrid. He had gathered the Nakujuk and the pushed them through the gate. He had forgotten about it until it suddenly appeared on TV. Ark smiled wryly and sat in front of his computer. He wanted to confirm the situation in the auction.

-The auction is complete. Death Engraved Stick: 11,100,000 won. -The auction is in progress. Magaro’s Deluxe Alchemy Tools: Currently 9,000,000 won.....

He received the best profit from the Netherworld items. As expected, they sold at exorbitant prices. No, to be honest he hadn't expected that much for the 'Death Engraved Stick.' He put it on the auction for 5 million won but the price went up to 10 million won in 1 day. The auction climbed so quickly that he even started to expect 20,000,000 won. But afterwards it only rose by 100,000 won and eventually it ended up being sold for 11,100,000 won.

"There aren't that many users raising Necromancers."

However selling 1 item for 11,100,000 won was clearly a jackpot. On the other hand, Magaro's Deluxe Alchemy Tools wasn't rising by a huge amount but it was rising steadily. There were still three days before the auction finished so he might end up receiving even more than the Death Engraved Stick. He expected it to sell at a higher price. Unlike the Necromancer, there were plenty of users raising alchemy.

"I might receive 20,000,000 won even with the handling fee."

Hyun-woo currently had 12,000,000 won in his bank account. He spent around 6,000,000 won every month so he had saved quite a lot. If he added this income then he would have 32,000,000 won. But for Hyun-woo it was strange to have money. He felt more uneasy. Money was a truly mysterious fellow. Whenever he gathered a little bit it always seemed like he needed more. Hyun-woo also felt the same. He started having many thoughts once he gathered some money.

'If Mother becomes a lot better in the future then she might be released from hospital. When the time comes I'll have to move to a more sanitary house for her..... And I should really put aside money for a game unit in case the entrance examination suddenly ends.'

But when he compared it to his past, they seemed like happy worries.

"Anyway, my income is unstable so I can't spend money recklessly. And I need to make more profit after thinking about my plans for the future. In addition, I spent 3,500 gold this time to create a store. Most of my spending is in investments. For the meantime I should tighten my belt."

Hyun-woo was moving the mouse when he suddenly stopped. He saw an unexpected message.

-You have received an instant purchase request.

Plated Gauntlets of Corrupted Hatred: 4,000,000 won.

“Instant purchase? For 4,000,000 won?”

Hyun-woo’s mouth widened. He had obtained the ‘Plated Gauntlets of Corrupted Hatred’ from Kaljapeu. It was a magic item so Ark didn’t have high expectations for it. Of course, it had a special option but the defense wasn’t that great compared to the level required to wear the item. In addition, the ‘hate’ stat was necessary or else the special option wouldn’t be available.

‘It should only get around 2,000,000 won.’

When he checked yesterday, the bid was only 1,800,000 won. Now he suddenly received an instant purchase request for 4,000,000 won.

“What kind of person is this?”

The purchase price was so outrageous that Hyun-woo looked at the requestor’s ID.

“Eh? Huh? T-this guy.....!”

The ID for the auction site was ‘Charming Man!’ It was an ID that he had seen before. No, to be precise Ark knew the person with this ID. It was the person who bought the ‘Sacred Earth Shield’ in the past. And that shield was the cause of Hyun-woo’s crisis in Salrin’s Towers. Yes, ‘Charming Man’ was the ID for Alan. In fact, Hyun-woo suffered some embarrassment just before entering the Netherworld. Hyun-woo had registered as a bounty hunter before going off to deal with Alan. And he stopped by Selebrid before going to the Netherworld to collect the 500 gold bounty.

However, he heard some unbelievable words from the Supreme Court judge. When the target died because of a bounty hunter they would be automatically trapped in jail. The NPCs would check and then pay a reward. But the judge said that Alan never appeared in jail. Thanks to that Hyun-woo still hadn’t received the reward of 500 gold.

‘What’s going on? I confirmed that Alan died.....’

It was still an unanswered mystery. After that he hadn’t heard any news about Alan. When the guy suddenly disappeared, Hyun-woo thought that Alan had given up on the game. He probably deleted his character so that the reward couldn’t be received. But now he suddenly appeared on the auction site and wanted to purchase an item. New World didn’t allow two characters so it was clearly Alan. But did it make sense that he raised his level so much that he could now buy a level 200 item?

‘But that’s not the only strange thing. Alan has a lot of money. He had so much that some of it is probably rotting. So why would he want to buy my items? Are there also a lot of rare gauntlets on the auction site? He could probably buy better gauntlets for 4 million won. So why....?’

He wouldn’t have been worried about it if the person wasn’t Alan. And Hyun-woo was soon able to guess the reason.

‘I’m sure that Alan needs these particular gauntlets. I don’t know exactly why but it must be important since he doubled the price on the instant purchase request. If that’s the case.....’

A smile spread on Hyun-woo’s mouth. His opponent was someone with a lot of money. And this was a necessary item for him. Then wasn’t there a way he could use this? Hyun-woo immediately rejected the purchase request and called the rehabilitation members.

“Are hyung-nims using their IDs on the auction site?”

“Uh, no. Why?”

“What will you do?”

“Make some money.”

Hyun-woo laughed as he replied. Normally the auction site directly connected to the account so they never informed others of their ID. However, the rehabilitation members didn’t ask any questions and

just gave their IDs and passwords. Thus Hyun-woo got his hands on 10 IDs and immediately started to manipulate the market price.

“The remaining auction period is 4 days. How far will you go?”

Hyun-woo used Jjak-tung’s ID to bid 4,010,000 won. Sure enough, ‘Charming Man’ bid 4,500,000 won after 1 hour. Then Hyun-woo connected to Bul-kkun’s ID after 1 hour and bid 4,510,000 won. So they played ping pong for 8 hours until the price for the gauntlets increased from 2 million won to 6 million won.

‘Huhuhu, will you increase it even more? Keep on increasing. If you give up because of this amount of money than your pride will be injured. I’ll use this opportunity to receive my bounty.’

Hyun-woo smirked as he bid 6,010,000 won. However, another bid did not come even after a long period of time. Hyun-woo suddenly became afraid.

‘What, what the? Surely this guy.....did he just give up?’

It was a chance to sell the gauntlets for 6 million won instead of 2 million won. In fact, Hyun-woo would’ve been satisfied with 6 million won. But he had to be greedy and bid one more time to increase it over 6 million won.

‘Please.....please just bid one more time.....’

Hyun-woo prayed as he glared at the monitor. If Alan gave up this bid then Hyun-woo would have to pay the 6 million won from his own account. Of course, that money would just return to Hyun-woo but he would still need to pay the 7% handling fee. 420,000 won would just fly away. Then he would have to sell the gauntlets and pay the fee again. It would end up harming Hyun-woo instead of Alan. However, a new bid did not come the next morning.

‘Dammit, I’m screwed!’

Hyun-woo sighed and was about to exit the auction site.

-You have received an instant purchase request.

Plated Gauntlets of Corrupted Hatred: 8,000,000 won.

“8...8 million won!”

Hyun-woo was shocked and saw that it was indeed Alan. He struggled for a while before deciding to accept. This was probably Alan’s limit. He didn’t know why Alan wanted the gauntlets so much but he couldn’t pass up the opportunity when the market price had increased by 4 times. Hyun-woo reached out and pressed the accept button.

“Huhuhu, Alan you were an easy mark!”

Although it wasn’t New World, once again Hyun-woo had won over Alan. After a while, Hyun-woo confirmed the transaction and stared warmly at his unit before entering it. Hyun-woo heard the sound of the unit connecting to his brain. Then the land of New World which promised profit and trouble appeared.

“Hmm.....”

Ark was lost in thought as he stared down at the scroll. After logging into the store, Roco told Ark that Bona was looking for him. The deciphering of the scroll had been completed.

“I didn’t know what information Ark hyung is looking for so I deciphered all the scrolls. You can read the separate translation I created.”

The ten scrolls Beseutyu designated mentioned the epic tale of the birth of the Netherworld. After reading it, Ark managed to obtain the desired information. There were a lot of expressions and abstract meanings due to the nature of the legend but he summed it all simply.

Surprisingly, hundreds of years ago the Netherworld was originally a part of middle earth. However, suddenly a huge calamity which split the sky and earth occurred. Numerous species and land was swallowed by the calamity and disappeared. Among them was the Netherworld. A huge storm struck the Netherworld after its world tree disappeared. The Netherworld was caught in the storm and sunk into the dimension lower than middle earth. And the air currents from that storm formed the sky in the Netherworld. The spinning sky Ark saw in the Netherworld was actually because of the dimensional storm. Also the strange weather and terrain in the Netherworld was because of the influence of the storm on that dimension.

After all, not all of the earth that moved to the dimension was in an intact state at the time. Sometimes a small pebble or even a giant mountain would become trapped after the dimension distorted or it would be left in a non-existent form. This was the 'Underground' that Beseutyu mentioned.

Unfortunately, that was everything written on the scroll. It didn't state how Ark could return the Underground to its original form. But the decrypted contents of the scroll did give him an important clue.

'The Netherworld's world tree!

The scrolls recorded that the world tree was destroyed in the storm before the Netherworld disappeared. So wasn't the core of all these events the world tree? And if it was regarding the world tree then Ark had a source to find out information from.

"I didn't expect to use it like this."

Ark took out the 'Sacred Branch' from his bag. The 'Sacred Branch' had come from Popo's trunk. It had various effects but the one Ark wanted right now was to communicate with Yggdrasil.

"But how do I use communication with this thing?"

Ark turned the branch around but as expected he didn't see a dial or call button. He thought for a moment before putting the branch to his forehead and focusing his mind. He was visualizing Yggdrasil when the space in front of his eyes suddenly turned white.

"Ugh, w-where is this?"

Ark scratched his head and looked around. Surprisingly Ark was in an entirely different place. He had been at the training centre in the woods and now he was in a wide open place where the horizon couldn't be seen. But that wasn't what caused Ark's surprise. In the far distance, many gold coins were stacked up like a huge mountain. It was literally a field of money. He couldn't afford to wonder where he was right now.

"T-this is a windfall!"

Ark plunged wildly into the money field. And he collected the gold coins like crazy. However, the gold coins turned into sand and dripped through his fingers when he touched them. Ark was confused and tried it a few more times but the results were the same.

"What the? A prank?"

Ark let out an impressive stream of curses. Then a dim light appeared and revealed an old man.

-We've finally met after a long time Deliverer.

"Eh? Yggdrasil!"

Ark stood up and approached Yggdrasil.

"Where on earth is this?"

-Hahaha, this must be your first time here. This is your spirit world. All the scenery here is what your mind imagined. Even so.....your spirit world.....seems.....really.....marvellous.

“Please don’t tease me.”

-I’m not teasing! This is really the most amazing spirit world I’ve been to.

Yggdrasil said with a laugh. Even though it was a game, but a field of money? It seemed somewhat superficial. Ark sighed with a melancholy expression before Yggdrasil asked.

-By the way did you call me for something?

“Oh, I contacted you because I have a question.”

Ark finally remembered his original purpose.

-Question?

“Yes, it is about the Netherworld’s world tree.”

-What? The Netherworld’s world tree? Have you been to the Netherworld?

Yggdrasil spoke in a frenzied voice and approached Ark. Ark was bewildered by the violent reaction and nodded.

“Huh? Yes..... There were various circumstances and I ended up going to the Netherworld. But I ran into some trouble while travelling through the Netherworld. A necessary item I need is stuck in a dimensional gap called the Underground. It happened in recent years but it seemed like the cause was the original phenomenon which destroyed the Netherworld.”

Ark roughly read the contents of the scrolls.

-I see what you mean. But half of the contents of those scrolls are wrong. This explanation might be long but you need to know it.

Yggdrasil nodded before opening his mouth.

-I've said this once before but the world trees is the existence which maintains the balance. It does nothing but it also does everything. Indeed, the world trees have a large number of roles. And originally there existed 4 world trees. These four trees secured the North, South, East and West respectively.

Yggdrasil suddenly started explaining the history of New World. Anyway according to Yggdrasil, New World used to consist of a much larger continent than now. However, a great change took place on that continent hundreds of years ago. It was thanks to the hand of the Dark Lord.....

At that time, the Dark Lord plunged the world into darkness before being defeated by the 7 heroes. However, the Dark Lord had one final weapon. He used a dark spell to drain the lives of all beings that belonged to the darkness in order to drive the world to ruin. It was the catastrophe written on the scrolls.

-It was horrible. Parts of the world literally vanished. But if there was darkness then there was always light to oppose it. The 7 heroes fought numerous battles before finding an ancient scroll filled with magic.

The 7 heroes were able to use the magic of the world trees to defeat the dark magic. The world trees which maintained balance poured all of their magic into the spell. But even such power couldn't fully stop the dark spell.

-It was possible to defend most of the earth and many lives. But the darkness at the edges of the world magic wasn't able to be stopped. A powerful curse swept through the ground and burned countless lives. The world trees used all their strength remaining to prevent it. It was power necessary to maintain the balance of the world.

Yggdrasil then looked at the horizon with a faraway look and sighed.

-Thankfully the life of the land was able to be maintained but all the world trees except for me lost their strength and withered up. At this point, the land they presided over wasn't fastened to the world and was unable to withstand the storm. Among them is the world tree Yuzuria, who maintained the land Seutandal.....which is the Netherworld you spoke of. This world is the lost continent.

Ark remembered seeing in the information window that popped up when he first entered the Netherworld. The 'Lost World=Seutandal' was clearly written on the Netherworld's information window. It meant that it was lost from middle earth. Although the history lesson on the Netherworld was interesting, it didn't contain the information he wanted to know.

"Then reverting the Underground back to the original dimension....."

-The only way to revert the Underground back is to stabilize the Netherworld. And consequently there is only one possible method.

"What is it?"

-The world tree of the Netherworld that I mentioned earlier....Yuzuria is not completely lifeless. If Yuzuria's life hadn't been depleted then the Netherworld would've never sunken to the bottom dimension. But it cannot regain its strength while stuck in the dimensional gap. Then the answer is simple. If you revive Yuzuria then the Netherworld will rise back to its original dimension and stabilize.

"The world tree can be revived?"

-That's right. The key is already in your hands. The 'Sacred Branch.' It is a treasure which can restore the vitality of the world trees. I believe that Yuzuria will have a defined body that is deeply hidden somewhere. If you return to the Netherworld and restore Yuzuria's power then everything will go back to its original form.

Yggdrasil grabbed Ark's hands and said.

-Deliverer, I ask you. Yuzuria defended this world with his whole body. He has the right to exist and I firmly believe that you can help him.

“Hah, you’re saying that to someone whose spirit world is like this?”

Ark was a narrow-minded guy. Although he said it in a sarcastic voice, Yggdrasil just laughed and pointed to the sky.

-I have such expectations because of this spirit world.

“What....huk!”

Ark raised his head to follow Yggdrasil’s fingers and let out a small scream.

Ark’s spirit world before was quite shallow. But now the gold coins were floating into the sky to form a sun which emitted a bright light. No, he thought it was the sun but when he looked closer he saw that it was a familiar presence. In the superficial spirit world of Ark, the bright light which did not allow darkness to exist was...

“M-mother!”

-.....I’ve never seen such a bright light in someone’s spirit world.....

“I accept. I’ll do it! Even if I have to risk my life!”

Ark blushed and the words tumbled out of his mouth as he looked at Yggdrasil. Dududung, the quest information window popped up.

The Resurrection of the Netherworld’s World Tree

You have listened as Yggdrasil conveyed a hidden history to you.

Finding the balance is the mission of all players in New World. The first step is to revive the Netherworld's world tree, Yuzuria. If successful then the lost world of Seutandal will re-join middle earth like before.

'A quest? And it is a special difficulty one!'

That meant it was a Lore quest! A Lore quest dealt with historical events that could have an impact on the entirety of New World. As he previously saw, it was extremely difficult and there wasn't any compensation for it except for the stars. It seemed fruitless. Besides, this was 4 stars so wouldn't it be way more difficult than in the past?

'What a misleading description....what will collecting stars give me? Well, even without this quest I would still need to revive Yuzuria.....'

Ark sighed and exited the spirit world. He knew the method to complete the quest. But there was a serious problem when he thought about it. The Underground would disappear when he resurrected Yuzuria. But at the same time the Netherworld would move to middle earth. That was the problem. So far, Ark had monopolized the Netherworld but once it moved to middle earth then users would flock to it like a cloud. However, that was a problem for the future.

What if the Hermes Alliance and the Nakujuk conquered the Netherworld while Ark was completing the quest?

'Currently the Nakujuk and Baran are preparing for war in the Netherworld. It is most likely that the Hermes Alliance and Nakujuk would occupy the southern region if they conquered the Netherworld. If the Netherworld moves to middle earth.....'

The Hermes Alliance would gain benefits that he couldn't even imagine. Without the Baran there was no hope of stopping the Nakujuk's conquest. But like Beseutyu said, the odds weren't in their favour even if the Baran joined forces and fought against the Nakujuk. Especially if the Hermes Alliance started to support them more actively. He couldn't just sit and watch as the Hermes Alliance occupied the Netherworld. In fact, he had no time to complete the quest.

"But there's nothing I can do.'

Of course Ark had his own forces. While fighting in Silvana, his attack group Dark Eden consisted of the rehabilitation group, the Meow, the raccoons, the reformed thieves and the soldiers from Jackson. Even if he called them again, he would only be able to gather dozens at most. On the other hand, this wasn't a war between guilds or a siege. It was a race war between the Baran and Nakujuk. Dozens of reinforcements wouldn't be enough. They wouldn't be a match for the Nakujuk and Hermes Alliance. He needed forces equivalent to a species in order to solve this problem.

'If I can't gather enough forces to defeat the Nakujuk then it will be a failure. Anyway, I can't allow the Nakujuk and Hermes Alliance to take over the Netherworld. In other words, I need to either stop the Nakujuk's offensive or maintain it in its previous state. But the forces needed.....'

Ark slowly sighed before a thought came to him.

'There is! There is something that could have enough power to change the battle situation in the Netherworld!'

"Shambala!"