

Ark Vol 12 C 3

Chapter 3

ACT 3 Show me the money!

“Have you been well in the meantime?”

After coming unharmed to the Netherworld, Ark and the Dark Brothers met up with Buksil and the rehabilitation members in Hagel Forest. Although he acted grumpy towards Ark, Shambala nodded and greeted the rehabilitation members politely. JusticeMan smiled and nodded.

“Oh Shambala, it’s been a while. Isn’t this the first time we’ve seen each other since Salrin’s Towers?”

Yes, I’m relieved to see hyung-nim.”

Ark stared at Shambala while muttering.

“What does that mean? You weren’t relieved to see me?”

“When are you done anything to make me trust you?”

Shambala declared sharply while looking scornful. Ugh, why was he acting like this? Ark could talk about how dependable he was for 4 days and 3 nights but there was no time. Jewel and the Nakujuk were still carrying out their plan to take over the Netherworld. They needed to join the Baran as soon as possible to discuss countermeasures.

“Shambala, we’ll have a serious talk later.”

Ark led the troops across the Netherworld.

‘That is the meeting place of the Baran?’

When they arrived at the Golgi Mountains, they saw the hastily set up tents and the armed Baran.

“W-what the? Who are you?”

Ark had been leading the troops but he was suddenly blocked by a group of Baran. They saw the chaotic assassins and judged them to be enemies. Even if they weren't chaotic, the Baran was being invaded so they were naturally wary of strangers. In the meantime, someone rushed out and hurriedly waved. It was Lariette who had gone with Beseutyu to the Golgi Mountains first.

“They're not enemies! It's people who have come to help the Baran!”

“Came to help us?”

“Yes, this is Ark-nim who Beseutyu-nim spoke about.”

The Baran quickly peeked at Ark after Lariette's explanation. Then Lariette turned to Ark and smiled.

“I've been waiting since I received your message.”

Ark had called Lariette before coming to the Netherworld. So Ark already grasped most of the situation. Lariette and Beseutyu lit the 'Pledge Beacon', gathering the Baran clan's scattered warriors and now the tribe's elders were gathered to discuss further measures.

“But where are the Baran clan's warriors?”

Ark surveyed the area and asked, causing Lariette's face to drop.

“Why are you looking like that?”

“That.....they’re all of the Baran clan’s warriors.”

“Huh?”

Ark looked dumbly around the camp. He blinked a few times before smiling awkwardly.

“Is this a joke?”

“.....”

“Where are the other warriors?”

“.....That’s it.”

Lariette sighed while Ark felt like he had been hit by a hammer.

“In the old days, the warriors of the Baran clan swore to regain their lost home in the north. After scattering, they disciplined themselves to train for that day. They are waiting for the moment when the Pledge Beacon would be lit up.”

That was the story Beseutyu told Ark about the warriors of the Baran clan. Wasn’t it a wonderful story? After hearing the story, Ark had expected burly and muscular smurfs. If Gargamel appeared then strong smurfs would also show up. Thus Ark had been somewhat relieved. It wasn’t a good situation but they might be able to do it with the help of the Baran clan’s warriors. But the reality wasn’t as wonderful as the legend.

“They look more like refugees than warriors. Have they even eaten anything?”

Dedric muttered while sitting on Ark’s shoulder. This time Ark 100% agreed with Dedric’s opinion. When he looked at the legendary Baran warriors, a sigh naturally came out. The Baran warriors were similar to the native people in a documentary he watched. Rather than having muscles like a warrior, they looked like they had been starving for 1 year. Of course, as a warrior they equipped armour and weapons but it

was so tattered that it was difficult to tell it was armour. They looked more like descendants of beggars than warriors. In addition, there were only around 1,000 of them.....

“What is going on? It’s different from what I heard.”

Ark burst out while Lariette explained with embarrassment. When the Baran had been driven out of the north, the south was truly a bleak land. The warriors weren’t able to protect the Baran from being driven out so they felt a responsibility to help. So they left on a trip to harden and discipline themselves. The legend went up to there..... But the warriors forgot one important fact.

They were warriors. They didn’t know how to do anything except fight. The warriors couldn’t repair their own weapons or armour so they had to abandon it eventually when it was in tatters. Thus they were literally naked and lost in the wilderness. In addition, they didn’t know how to raise livestock or grow crops. The warriors also didn’t know how to forage ingredients. Even so, the warriors couldn’t abandon their pride to return to the clan. Fortunately, the Baran warriors barely managed to find sustenance every day. After 100 years, the barely surviving warriors looked like some African natives.

“When the Pledge Beacon was lit, the warriors quickly ran here and it is the first time they could eat a full meal.”

‘They’re similar to the refugee soldiers during the Warring states period.....how can it be okay if they’ve just started eating?’

Ark immediately became gloomy at Lariette’s words.

These soldiers were the main force fighting against the Hermes and Nakujuk Alliance? If he added in the combat difference between the two species then the result was already determined. No, the most likely scenario was that the Nakujuk would conquer the Netherworld. But an ‘absolute’ scenario did not exist in New World. The world would vary depending on the player’s choices, that was New World.

‘When the Dark Brothers entered the war then a number of scenarios were likely overturned. And the Baran clan is still here. I might be able to gather the ordinary soldiers to fight against the Nakujuk like I did the raccoon clan. If the trainers are used well then that would be considerably powerful as well. Yes, it’s still too early to be disappointed.’

Ark tried to think positively.

“But the problem isn’t with the Baran clan’s warriors.”

“Yes, there’s a bigger problem?”

“.....Follow me. The elders of the Baran clan are gathered in that tent.”

Lariette sighed and headed towards the tent. She looked so depressed that Ark started to feel uneasy. There was an even bigger problem than the disappointing warriors? Ark was about to trail after her with a concerned look when the rehabilitation members suddenly said.

“You, you, you, you, who is that woman?”

“Yes, what? I told you, she’s Lariette-nim.”

“The girl who was with Alan in the past?”

“Well, there are circumstances.....”

Ark scratched his head while the rehabilitation members clamoured around him.

“You rascal, so you’ve been flirting with women while in the Netherworld?”

“Salivating over the enemy? Is that right?”

“What about Roco at the store?”

“Unforgivable! I will judge you in the name of justice.”

“If you desert your first wife then you’ll receive punishment!”

“What are you talking about?” My relationship with Lariette-nim isn’t like that.”

Ark’s answer made the rehabilitation members jump.

“Ah, no?”

“Yes, I just happened to meet her here by chance. And what’s with the first wife? Roco also isn’t like that.....”

Ark complained but the rehabilitation members were already not listening. The group exchanged suspicious glances and muttered.

“Huhuhu, nothing between them?”

“Meeting a maiden in a mysterious dimension gives off a somewhat good feeling.”

“Hey, you saliva is dripping. That lady is mine.”

“What the? You think I’ll let you act freely?”

At any rate, the old bachelors squabbled among themselves.....

Ark sighed and shook his head.

“Please don’t get any ideas. Lariette-nim has a boyfriend.”

“Sheesh, I guess goal can’t enter if there’s already a goalkeeper?”

“Is that goalkeeper also a tycoon?”

Ark sank the rehabilitation members’ hopes with a few words and headed towards the tent filled with elders. The ambiance of the tent was even more depressing than the rehabilitation members. There were 10 Baran clan elders gathered in the tent, who would open their mouths before sighing and closing it again. When Ark entered, there wasn’t even a glance or a reaction. Beseutyu frowned at the elders’ apathetic expressions and approached Ark.

“Ark, I heard from Lariette-nim. You came with reinforcements?”

“Yes, they’re in front of the tents. But why is the atmosphere like this?”

“That is.....”

Beseutyu explained the situation in a rough voice.

“Before you arrived, we learned that the Letter Movement Tower had been completed in the valley village. After moving some troops, the Nakujuk currently have 2,000 troops stationed in the south. They’ve already occupied most of the eastern region.”

“2,000 already.....”

The number felt like chewing a grain of sand in his mouth. The current power of the Baran clan’s warriors.....numbered 1,000 beggars, 800 Dark Brothers, Ark and the rehabilitation group. On the other hand, the Nakujuk had 2,000 troops and that number would just increase thanks to the reception tower. Not only was quality a problem, but they were also inferior in numbers. The only way was to gather all the power of the Baran clan and oppose them.

“But what is being done here? The Nakujuk has already conquered the east so they have the materials needed to supply the war. Shouldn’t we gather more troops quickly?”

“That.....”

Beseutyu glanced at the elders. At that time, one of the silent elders tapped the table and opened his mouth.

“We have no intention of fighting the Nakujuk.”

Ark looked bemused and thought he heard wrong for a moment.

“What?”

“I said we’re not going to fight.”

“And I asked what does that mean?”

Ark became incensed and the elder continued talking in a rough tone.

“Aren’t you people foreigners? Why do you want to interfere in this matter between the Nakujuk and Baran? Of course, I roughly know the situation thanks to Beseutyu. I’m thankful you came from a distant place to help us. But as you saw, this is clearly not a situation where we can fight.”

The elders nodded in agreement.

“You said you brought 800 reinforcements? You want to fight against thousands of Nakujuk with 800 people? Besides you are foreigners. If the situation becomes bad then you will give up in a moment. We can’t entrust the lives of our clan to those kinds of people.”

“Hey, isn’t that too severe!”

Beseutyu shouted but the elders just turned their backs.

“That’s enough, we don’t want to hear anymore.”

“Didn’t you see? The refugees gathered outside the tents are the warriors we believed in. We believed in a fantasy. Their appearance is symbolic of our plight right now.”

“We never had a chance from the moment the Nakujuk came from over the northern mountains to invade us. If we fight then we’ll die. But we might be able to live if we surrender. I’m sorry but we’re taking the possibility where there is a slight chance that we’ll live.”

“Beseutyu, you’re an elder of the clan so don’t you think their lives should come above anything else? Sometimes it is brave to accept humiliation.”

Ark was lost for words after the elders spoke. Ark was able to leave the Netherworld so it wasn’t his problem. He thought that the Baran clan thought like him. But they only considered Ark as a foreigner. The Baran were similar to most NPCs. They had been looking forward to the warriors’ appearance, but once it disappointed them and the situation changed then they lost all their courage. The Baran clan was afraid of war, and just like the raccoons they would not risk their lives on a foreigner’s word.

‘It’s my fault for not thinking ahead. But.....’

If the Baran wanted to abandon the war then it was a serious problem. He would instantly fail the and quests. In addition, the Dark Brothers had followed Ark to the Netherworld so there was no guarantee what would happen to his relationship with them. It was also a life or death matter for Ark. No, he didn’t have time to worry so far ahead. Ark was just sighing in frustration when a message window appeared in front of him.

-Shambala has used the ‘Trill’ skill on you.

Would you like to accept?

He accepted and Shambala’s furious voice shook his eardrums.

-You bastard, you dragged the Dark Brothers into this without confirming the situation properly? Raising Isabel's expectations..... Anyway, you have to somehow resolve this. If the Dark Brothers advance into the Netherworld stops here and Isabel becomes disappointed then I will never let you go. You'll be watching your back no matter where you go.

'Damn, this guy is just rattling on and on.....'

Ark felt annoyance rise.

'Damn, what can I do? The raccoons ate drugs but there is no way I can use that method. It makes the head strange. That Shambala will see through it instantly. If that happens then both the Hermes guild and Shambala will want to kill me.'

Then Ark felt a sudden flash of light in his head.

'Wait, kill? Aha, I see. Okay, I might die either way so I'll use a plan of desperation. Where everyone will die together!'

Anyway, he had been cornered. What wouldn't he do?

-Okay, Shambala. I'll do something. But you'll have to help me.

Ark quickly explained his strategy to Shambala.

-.....I understand. I'll believe in you for the moment.

Shambala answered before Ark suddenly struck the table with his fist.

"Shut up!"

Ark used 'Intimidation' and shouted in a menacing voice. 'Intimidation' had a 50% success rate of persuading NPCs. However, if Ark failed to persuade the elders then he would receive a dreadful penalty. It was a plan of desperation.

'Now the dice has been thrown. I have no choice but to believe in Art of Communication and Intimidation.'

'Intimidation' also had the effect of causing stiffness so everyone in the room froze like a mouse. After a moment an elder opened his mouth and stuttered.

".....W-what did you say?"

"I said to shut up."

"What, what the? You dare.....!"

"Dare? How are you entitled to use that word?"

Ark spoke with an aggressive curl to his lips.

"Sometimes it is brave to accept humiliation? Ha, even a dog passing by would laugh at you. Okay, you can act like that. Feel free to surrender because of fear while calling yourselves brave for accepting humiliation. But can you speak those words with confidence in front of your children? Beseutyu, are you brave enough to tell Bona to accept being a slave?"

"Ah, no....I.....I'm not."

Beseutyu stuttered as he shook his head with embarrassment. Ark turned his piercing eyes and spoke to the other elders.

"I know what happened in the valley village. The residents were also Baran like you. But they fought bravely and sacrificed themselves for the children. I looked at them and saw how great the Baran clan

was. I want to help somehow so I gathered my colleagues and came. But then what? You want to yield? Dammit, don't talk nonsense!"

Ark had thought of using 'Intimidation' to persuade them. But anger really started to well up when he began talking. He brought reinforcements for his own benefit and theirs as well, but now the original support army was so scared it wasn't willing to fight? Who wouldn't think it was absurd? Thanks to his frustration, Intimidation became more effective. Its effect showed immediately. Ark's bloody atmosphere overwhelmed the elders who didn't even dare to speak.

"I wonder what the children will see if they could see you now. Adults just giving up even though invaders are here to take their rights away.....just rolling over obediently like a dog. I hope you still consider 'submitting to humiliation to be courage' when you see your children being treated like dogs."

Ark sent the elders a disgusting look before suddenly shouting.

"I'm sorry, I have a good personality but I can't stand seeing such dirty actions. Dark Brothers!"

"Yes, Ark-nim!"

"Dispose of all of them!"

Everybody's face was shocked by the end of Ark's words. Confusion was seen on the elders, the rehabilitation group, Lariette and even the Dark Brothers' faces. But Shambala unexpectedly smiled and nodded at the command.

"The Dark Brothers will obey Ark's command."

All the assassins in the tent suddenly held a dagger to the neck of the elders after the command.

"Ah Ark, what are you doing? These people are the elders of the Baran clan."

Beseutyu looked at Ark with perplexed eyes. But Ark didn't even look at him and just stared at the frozen elders.

"Why am I doing this? Weren't you prepared to surrender to your enemies? That's funny. Why do you think I would spare you when you're giving up? So you can live to be a slave? Their purpose for invading is to exploit you for labour of course. But that will apply to young people and children. Old people like you will just be useless. What reason do they have to keep you alive?"

The elders flinched and thought 'we are quite old' as they looked at each other. Ark smiled pleasantly and continued.

"You're subservient yet you dare to mention courage. An old person like you would be thrown away like trash. How wonderful. Well, you're determined so there's no need to drag it out. You should die now so that your lives can be slightly useful. For my sake rather than the Baran family."

"What?"

"Why are you surprised? As you said, I'm a foreigner so I have nothing to do with the Baran clan. So there's no reason for me to help the Baran clan. It's easier to negotiate with the Nakujuk with your heads cut off. Don't worry, I won't kill the rest of the Baran clan since the Nakujuk need them as slaves. And I'll tell your offspring. I'll tell them they have to live as slaves because of your courage. Oh, your descendants will be talking about your courage for centuries. How nice."

"Why are you doing this to us?"

"Do you have a will? I'll pass it onto your family. Get rid of them!"

"I understand."

The assassins raised their swords with surprise at his shout.

"W-wait a minute. We were too short-sighted."

“Too short-sighted? What does that mean?”

“Yes, of course courage is needed to surrender. It is necessary. But it also requires courage to fight back..... Yes, that’s right. We realized it after hearing your sincere advice. Isn’t that right?”

“Ah, that’s right, yes. You’re sincerely worried and care about us.”

The elders’ words went through a complete 180 degree change. If they heard threats while he was using ‘Intimidation’ then their tails would lower immediately. That’s because people like them only thought of themselves. If the traffic police made a small mistake and the road got blocked off then people would get out of their cars and start raging at the police. But it was rare for people to run wild because of a blockage in the road. That’s because people like that would turn around immediately if the police threatened them. It was reality.

“So it was just a joke and we don’t intend to surrender. Actually, we confirmed how determined you were to help us. That’s right, yes. Hahaha, it’s good to see such determination. Now we know. We’ll believe and follow you. The Nakujuk is our enemy! Of course we have to fight against them.”

...Now they were making excuses?

Didn’t they moan and complain towards Beseutyu? Anyway, the elders completely waved the white flag so an information window appeared.

-Your ‘Intimidation’ skill had a higher level of success so the proficiency has increased.

Intimidation (Advanced, Active): Intimidation isn’t use cursing and scaring the opponent. It is also possible to persuade and threaten in the same conversation. You’ve become more skilful at adapting threats to the circumstances and can subdue the opponents using your charisma.

Mana consumption: 50

Advanced Intimidation bonus effect: Charisma

‘Eh? What is this?’

Just like most of his skills, ‘Intimidation’ didn’t increase after reaching 299 points. It was easy to reach intermediate level but some special enlightenment was needed to raise it to advanced. Using Intimidation to force the opponent to submit was necessary to raise its proficiency. Thanks to the elders, his Intimidation increased to advanced and he also gained the side effect of charisma. It was killing two birds with one stone.

At this point JusticeMan and the rehabilitation members realised Ark’s intention.

“Ark, I know your heart but please stop this.”

“Yes, they were just testing us.”

“Now they’ll actively help.”

“.....I understand.”

Ark spoke in a weaker voice. But he didn’t forget to say one final thing to the elders.

“I’ll watch a little more.”

So the meeting proceeded after Ark’s sincere (?) persuasion. The assassins surrounded the elders as the meeting of the Baran=Dark Brothers Allied forces began with Ark presiding over it as the commander. Of course he made decision using the majority wins system, but it wasn’t that different from Ark reigning as a dictator as the elders listened to all his opinions.

“I understand the circumstances of both sides so I’ll take command of the soldiers for the moment.”

"I agree!"

"Like the elders said, the odds aren't in our favour if we clash with the Nakujuk in our present state. The Nakujuk have occupied the east so we should give up on that and strengthen our power."

"I agree!"

"Oh, before that I should get some rest....."

"I agree!"

Ark's power in the command tent was comparable to Hitler. They would all unanimously agree even if Ark suggested adding dog poo to the dinner menu.

'Huhuhu, this is the effect of Intimidation? But I should still be vigilant.'

"For a smooth connect between the tribes, the elders should stay here until the battle ends. If the elders are at the forefront then the soldiers will be able to obtain more courage. Don't worry. They'll risk their lives to protect the elders."

The elders' faces darkened at Ark's words. It meant they were being held as hostages until the battle finished. Shambala and the rehabilitation members held their tongues as Ark distributed the tasks. Ark concentrated and sent a message to Shambala through Trill.

-Huhuhu, isn't it wonderful? This is what I call administration.

-Really.....I'm lost for words.

Anyway, the Baran clan's war preparations accelerated under Ark's command.

Hyun-woo looked at the doctor with desperation. His mother had received her regular check-up three days ago. Patients with complex symptoms like his mother were subjected to a comprehensive examination once every two months. That's because there was a limit to the doctor diagnosis if they just looked at the patient. Recovering patients in the ICU would often develop internal problems so they needed to be checked. If they did then they would have to be given stronger medication or in severe cases, undergo another surgery.

'Fortunately, it has been 1 year since she's had any problems.....'

It happened 2 years and 3 years ago, when her health which seemed to improve suddenly deteriorated. Therefore Hyun-woo could never hide his anxiety whenever he came to receive the test results.

'It'll be okay. These days Mother's complexion has improved a lot. Obviously it will be fine.'

Hyun-woo placed his hands on his chest and prayed desperately.

"Patient number 809, Park So-mi....."

The doctor muttered as he looked through the records on the monitor. It took longer than previous times. Was there a bad result somewhere? Hyun-woo looked at the monitor nervously. However, he couldn't possibly understand any of the medical jargon. Doctors would normally use easier terms with patients and caregivers but there was no need for that on their records. Although things like 'Cancer, dying soon' were easily understood by patients.

"Hyun-woo ssi?"

Hyun-woo was interrupted while thinking useless thoughts. The doctor rotated his chair and faced Hyun-woo.

"Huh? Yes!"

Hyun-woo answered with a tense face but the doctor just smiled.

“Based on the results, your mother is improving at a very fast rate.”

“R-really?”

“Yes, after checking the records for the last 6 months I’m positive she’s entered a recovery period. There are no specific findings on the X-ray, MRI or blood tests. It is too early to tell if she can completely recover but at this rate there is some hope.”

“Thank you, thank you so much!”

Hyun-woo grasped the hand of the doctor and bowed. Fireworks lit up his head as he thought about the past few years. 5years.....this was the 6th year. He still remembered the first time he saw his mother lying in the ICU. His mother couldn’t even move a single finger by herself. No, she even relied on the doctors to blink her eyes. Hyun-woo honestly never believed that his mother could recover completely. He was just thankful that she was alive. That was 6 years ago. It was a short period but it felt so long. How much anxiety had he suffered during that short time?

But now the doctor told him there was hope. Hyun-woo normally didn’t like doctors, but in a hospital a doctor was like a god. The words of a doctor could beckon the patient and caregivers into either heaven or hell. Hyun-woo now felt like he was in heaven from the doctor’s positive words. And the doctor really looked like Buddha or God.

“It is thanks to the will of the patients and caregivers.”

The doctors also felt good when announcing excellent results. Thus the doctor spoke in a much lighter tone.

“It might be time to look at moving her to a hospital outpatient.”

“Outpatient?”

“Yes, we’ll continue to monitor the prognosis but if the results are maintained for the next check-up in two months then we’ll switch her status to outpatient. Fortunately, Park So-mi has been tolerating it well but sometimes a long hospitalization can be mentally exhausting. Changing the environment is often helpful in recovering. I’m hoping it’s the same for Park So-mi.

Your mother is also eager to reduce the hospital costs. Therefore, the doctor will recommend that she become an outpatient.”

If his mother continued improving at the next check-up in two months, she would be switched to an outpatient status. Hyun-woo’s head felt like it was spinning in circles from the good mood. He could live with his mother once again! How long had he been waiting for this? Hyun-woo flew out of the doctor’s office.

“Mother, did you hear? You might become an outpatient after two months!”

“Yes, I heard just now.”

His mother laughed and pointed towards the nurse holding a syringe.

“If it ends up like that....”

Hyun-woo felt his heart rattle and sat down at his mother’s words. Wasn’t this like scattering vinegar on noodles?

“What are you saying? Of course it should be like that. Even the doctor is confident this time. Do you think living in hospital is better than living with me?”

“Don’t say such a silly thing.”

“So don’t sound so weak again. Then I’ll really be angry.”

Hyun-woo grumbled like a three year old child. His could fight gangsters in the street or persuade NPCs in New World with flattery, yet Hyun-woo was like a mere child in front of his mother. No, he wanted to be a child.

“Okay, I understand.”

His mother laughed and nodded his head. Hyun-woo’s chest tightened at the sound of his mother’s bright laugh. The happy energy swelling made him feel like he was going to explode! It really seemed like he was going to die from his heart exploding.

“What is it? What? Mother, what else do you want to have? No, what do you need as an outpatient? Ah, yes clothes! Clothes. Shall I buy a few things for you to wear?”

“What, already.....and there’s still a lot of my old clothes at home.”

“Those things have already gone out of fashion.”

“It’s fine. When have I ever paid attention to my clothes?”

‘That’s why I want to buy them.’

Hyun-woo thought with sadness welling in his throat. His mother had been hospitalized and stayed in one room for several years. He had to live in a one bedroom apartment which didn’t allow deposits. Thus he had to sell or give away many second hand goods. It was when he was clearing his mother’s clothes that Hyun-woo suddenly realized.

‘These are my mother’s clothes?’

They were vaguely familiar yet he wasn’t used to seeing them..... Hyun-woo then started paying attention to his mother’s attire. Mother, because she was a mother.....had no interest in what clothes she was wearing or what she ate. But tears fell when he looked at his mother’s clothes again. They were clothes she bought at the market and instead of buying new ones when it got torn, he could see traces

of stitch marks. It was the same for his father's clothes. There were many faded clothes with a musty odour that seemed to be over 10 years old.

.....His parents had been wearing those clothes. Their spoiled son would spend 200,000 won or 300,000 won on new jeans or ask for new clothes every season while his parents had been wearing those types of clothes. He hadn't known. Although he had been raised with love, he never truly realised his parent's love until he was eighteen. Their spoiled son was moody and didn't want to spend any time with them until they were yanked away when he was eighteen. No, he hadn't tried to understand.

'I won't make the same mistakes.'

Hyun-woo had vowed on that day. He learned how to give up and how to stay down. He couldn't learn how to be tough from books or dramas. He had been taught it with force. All of it was for his mother. So what if they couldn't afford designer handbags? Or a new car?

"Mother, just focus on your health and don't worry. When you become an outpatient then I'll buy you delicious food and fashionable clothes. Understood?"

"Thank you for your words."

"They're not just words!"

"Okay, I understand." You've surprised the nurse."

His mother soothed him like a child when Hyun-woo raised his voice.

"I.....I'm fine. It's time for your physical therapy now."

"Ah, yes. Nurse-nim, thank you. Thank you very much. Take good care of my mother!"

Hyun-woo bowed many times and left the hospital room.

“You have a really good son.”

“Yes.....that is my son. My only son.”

His mother looked towards the door of the hospital room with tearful eyes after the nurse’s words. Hyun-woo was still in an ecstatic mood as he left the hospital. He would do whatever it took for his mother. If his mother felt better than he would feel better as well.

“Ah, Hwa-rang ajusshi!”

The first person who came to his mind was Gwon Hwa-rang. Yes, Gwon Hwa-rang would be delighted by news of his mother’s recovery. He would always call him after receiving the test results. Hyun-woo didn’t want to convey the news over a phone so he took a bus towards Gwon Hwa-rang’s house.

“Ohhhh, is that true?”

“Congratulations!”

“Damn, finally.....Noonim(more polite way of saying older sister).....!”

“Since it is like this. We need some celebratory gifts!”

“Yes, shouldn’t we spend money on an occasion like this? Ya, the money!”

Gwon Hwa-rang and the rehabilitation members were delighted. But the sight of the huge men running back and forth was quite funny. Although they wanted to go to the hospital immediately, Gwon Hwa-rang suddenly spoke.

“But Hyun-Woo, where will your mother live when she is an outpatient?”

“Huh?”

Hyun-woo was startled and looked at Gwon Hwa-rang. Come to think of it, that was the most important thing he needed. His mother was coming home. He had been too busy celebrating that he never thought about it. The place Hyun-woo currently lived in was rented. It was a box filled with a TV, computer, scattered clothes and the game unit. In addition, the bathroom was inconveniently outside. How could he bring his sick mother to such a place? If his mother was discharged then she also needed a bed. Of course, she also needed a proper sized bathroom that was indoors. And it should be close to a hospital and on the 1st floor thanks to her wheelchair. That was the minimum conditions. Obviously, he only needed it after two months but he couldn't prepare a new residence in just one or two days.

"I have to start checking from now on."

"It won't be easy finding a home that matches those conditions....."

Gwon Hwa-rang spoke in a worried voice but one of the rehabilitation members just laughed and came forward.

"Hyung-nim, have you forgotten what I specialize in?"

The person who said this was Yoo An-gook. He was a former real estate conman and his nickname in the rehabilitation group was Bu Dong-san (Real Estate).

"You can trust me."

"No way, you better not practice a scam on our younger brother." "Just wait a moment. I'll find you an amazing home in an instant. Bu Dong-san still has experience in this."

Bu Dong-san started walking around on his phone.

"Ooh.....really? The conditions that I mentioned? Ah ah, really? Hey, isn't that really good? Where? I understand. I'll go with some other guys right now so please wait. Okay, I'm going now."

After approximately 30 minutes, Bu Dong-san hand up the phone.

“Hyung-nim and I have to go now. Hyun-woo, you come as well.”

“Huh? Right now?”

“It’s good timing to find a nice house. So you should come along.”

Bu Dong-san, Gwon Hwa-rang and Hyun-woo visited a house near the hospital.

“President Kim, it’s me. Show me the house you mentioned earlier.”

It had only been an hour since he mentioned it yet Hyun-woo was already visiting a house. He always thought this, but Gwon Hwa-rang and the rehabilitation members’ energy had always been unthinkable. The house President Kim guided them to was a house with a small garden and 3 floors.

“The main house is the 1st floor while the 2nd and 3rd floors are rented out. The owners have to be in a foreign country for a few years so they want to rent out the 1st floor while they’re abroad. It should fit the criteria you mentioned perfectly. I spoke to the owner while I was waiting. Let’s enter and I’ll give a more detailed explanation.”

“Uh, this house is.....?”

Hyun-woo tilted his head to one side as he followed President Kim inside. The house didn’t look that different but when he went inside, he saw that the structure was strange. Iron rods were installed from the front door to the living room and on the walls next to the living room. The iron rods didn’t ruin the interior but why would they even install iron rods in the first place? Hyun-woo had been thinking that when the landlord appeared.

“Have you come to see the house?”

“Yes, this is the young man I described earlier.”

The landlord suddenly grabbed Hyun-woo's hand at the end of President Kim's words.

"I've heard about your situation. It's hard but please have strength."

"Huh? What are you.....?"

"I heard that you wanted a house you could live in with your sick mother. In fact, the circumstances are also similar to us. My father collapsed a few years ago and he still has limited mobility. We installed these rods to avoid any inconvenience for him when he lived here."

Now Hyun-woo could see the reasons for the rods. They were to help the sick father who had difficulties sometimes. It reminded him of the waist high railings he saw installed in the hospital hallways. It wasn't just the living room. The bathroom was also designed to be easy to use for a patient.

"My father is now going to live at a rehabilitation hospital in a foreign country for a while. It is a quire well-known facility. But I didn't want to leave the house like this so I've been looking for a tenant who could use it."

Hyun-woo was impressed by the landlord's attention to detail.

'I still have a long way to go!'

He was so busy celebrating that he hadn't consider the thing his mother needed most.... Anyway, Hyun-woo really liked the house. It might seem inconvenient but it was the best environment for people with disabilities to live in. Besides, it was also closer to the hospital than the place Hyun-woo was currently living in. Hyun-woo knew how difficult it was to find a house that perfectly matched all his conditions.

"When are you going abroad?"

"The weather is still cold so we'll be going in a month or two."

It was just in time! At this point, Hyun-woo knew that the house was perfect for his purpose. If he missed this chance then he didn't know when he would find a house like it again.

"I'll take it."

Then the landlord laughed softly and nodded.

"I guess your circumstances are similar to ours. I'm thankful that you will move in."

He couldn't remember what happened after that. Thanks to Bu Dong-san, President Kim cut the real estate brokerage fee and Hyun-woo and the landlord went over the contract. He had a satisfied expression but once he looked back, Hyun-woo felt like screaming.

'Ack, w-what have I done.....?'

He liked the house 100% There were no regrets in that regard. But the problem was the money for the house. It was 80,000,000 won. Normally it would be 90,000,000 but the landlord understood Hyun-woo's circumstances and took 10,000,000 off. It was still a considerable amount of money but Hyun-woo thought it was possible. Thanks to the deposit from the last auctions, he currently had 45,000,000 won in his bank account. He had to pay the hospital bills for the last two months so that was 20,000,000 won left for the deposit money.

'I need 60 million won. Fortunately, Ark had 5,000 gold so I can cash that in at any time. I have to somehow save another 1,000 gold in the next two months.'

Hyun-woo thought this and signed the contract. But he was careless and forgot an important fact. Ark's bag clearly had 5,000 gold. But a few days ago, he had invested 3,500 gold into creating a store. Thanks to that, his remaining money was 1,500 gold. His gold had recovered thanks to Sid and the unicorn horn he obtained. In other words, the amount he had to make in two months was 4,500 gold not 1,000 gold! If he didn't earn the money in two months than the 20 million won he used to sign the contract would be taken away.

"Perhaps if you have insufficient funds...."

Gwon Hwa-rang had whispered to him while they were returning. And Bu Dong-san who was holding the steering wheel chuckled.

“Is this a trick to prepare a newlywed house?”

“This brat what are you saying....Hyun-woo, don’t misunderstand. It’s not like that.”

“I know. But I’ll save up my balance.”

Gwon Hwa-rang looked dissatisfied at Hyun-woo’s answer but he didn’t say anything else. Of course, the reason Hyun-woo refused Gwon Hwa-rang’s offer wasn’t because of Bu Dong-san’s joke. If his mother remarried then the only possible person was Gwon Hwa-rang. He hadn’t changed his mind about that. However, preparing his mother’s remarriage and renting a house was different. Hadn’t he vowed to do everything in his power for his mother?

‘45,000,000 won in two months....!’

Hyun-woo clenched his teeth together tightly.

Okay, he would do whatever it took to raise it! Hyun-woo’s tenacious spirit knew there was only one way to raise that money.

‘I didn’t just waste that 3,500 gold. It is investment. I’ll be able to recover a certain amount after two months. And I’ll receive a considerable amount of money when I complete Magaro’s quest. Yes, that will possibly be sufficient. I have to quickly earn money and save it from the Netherworld!’

Hyun-woo entered the unit without changing his clothes when he got home.

‘Money, earn money for my mother!’

The game unit vibrated and Hyun-woo was once again in New World. Ark’s eyes when he returned to New World were even more thirsty for money.

“Show me the money!”

Ark’s roar echoed through New World.