

## Ark Vol 12 C 6

### Chapter 6

#### ACT 6 Ageiron

-Ageiron.

A large city spread in front of you after escaping the lava cave. This is the ancient city in the Netherworld where the Baran used to flourish, Ageiron. The nature and peace loving Baran clan built the beautiful city around the world tree Yuzuria. But now it was ruled by the Nakujuk and the old beauty of Ageiron couldn't be found anymore. The whole city is covered rusted steel and grey rocks. The world tree Yuzuria stands in the heart of the city while letting out a dismal atmosphere.

'We finally arrived.'

Ark looked at the distant city. The lava cave was like a tunnel piercing straight through the northern mountains. After going through the exit with much difficulty, they had managed to immediately move to the opposite side of the northern mountains. Luckily the Nakujuk hadn't occupied every part of the north. After moving through the northern mountains, they had managed to find Ageiron which was their destination. As Ark's group starting moving north, he noticed something strange. Beseutyu had said the northern forests were a lush, beautiful place. But the north was actually more barren than the south. Almost everywhere was a desert covered with coarse sand with occasional dry woods appearing.

'Is this the influence of the world tree?'

Ark recalled what Bona had deciphered from the scroll. The scroll stated that the Netherworld was initially an abundant place, regardless of north or south. When the world tree became deprived of its power, the south which was the furthest away from it started to become barren. This was the reason why the Nakujuk swarmed to the north and occupied Ageiron. However, the world tree had been deprived of its power for 100 years. In addition, the Nakujuk indiscriminately killed the forests in order to build their garrisons and the north became devastated. On the other hand, the Baran's enthusiasm for nature changed the south into a better environment.

'Is the situation reversing the reason why the Nakujuk want to conquer to south again?'

This was a scene which clearly showed the importance of protecting the environment. Even though he now knew all the Nakujuk's reasons, he still resented them. Anyway, Ageiron was a larger city than he thought. It was like a medieval castle with several layers of walls spread out in a circular form, with various buildings in the region between the walls. And the heart of the city was the towering world tree Yuzuria which stretched out to touch the sky. Of course it had changed to a dead twisted tree with shrivelled branches.

'We have to cross the city in order to revive Yuzuria?'

The group naturally sighed as they saw the vast number of Nakujuk teeming in Ageiron. Currently they only had 8 people who were Ark, Shambala, Lariette, Bul-kkun, Ddeok-dae, Jjak-tung, Tazza and Yapsab. But Ark's purpose was to restore Yuzuria so there was no reason to fight every Nakujuk in Ageiron. He had to stay undetected by the enemy until he reached Yuzuria. It wouldn't be easy if they were users like Jewel but the opponents were NPCs. It was like an old gaming style popular with users 'Jikbo (a method of controlling the game but not fighting against monsters and only going up against bosses)' where using the appropriate skills would increase the odds in their favour.

'That's why I picked a variety of professions.'

"Everybody please eat this for the moment."

While taking a break, Ark created many types of cuisine and arranged them like a buffet. They were deluxe dishes generously made with a lot of ingredients.

"Oh, it is good to travel with you during moments like these."

The group were tired from the lava cave and quickly scraped clean the buffet. In the meantime, Ark collected the group's equipment and repaired it. It was truly a service which bled him! But in this situation he had to do everything possible to raise the strength of the party. Lariette's buffs also raised the stats of the group considerably.

"List of secondary effects."

-Information window of secondary effects applied.

\* Food effects

【 Energy Drink 】 【 Tuntun Roast 】 【 Sweet and Sour Past 】 【 Herb Salad 】 【 Shrimp Tempura  
】

\* Buff effects

【 Storm Breathing (Attack Speed + 10%) duration: 30 minutes】

【 Warrior's Concentration (Critical Hit Chance + 20%) duration: 30 minutes】

【 Hero's Spirit (Attack power + 10%) duration: 1 hour】

\* Special skills effect

【Blade Maintenance (Sword Attack +3%) duration: 1 hour】

【 Intermediate Laundry (Defense + 7%) duration: 4 hours】

【 If the Innocence Knight becomes the leader than the party's defense and attack will rise by 7% 】

\* Effects of Tonic currently taking

【 Sipjeondaebotang (TL: type of Korean herbal soup) (Strength +1, Stamina +1) duration: 18th day 】

Reading the combined effects really was amazing. Currently Ark's Survival Cooking dishes could be compared to the effects of the finest cuisine. But with every good thing, there was always a downside. If there weren't any repeat dishes, it was possible to eat 10 different types of food. It was also subjected to one limitation. Satiety. If satiety reached 100% then they couldn't eat any more dishes. Even if the duration of a dish ran up, if his satiety was full then he wouldn't be able to eat another type. Therefore he couldn't cook excessively and his ingredients piled up.

This was the main disadvantage of Survival Cooking. The effect of the dishes on stats was better. But the increased effects also increased the amount of satiety. Quite a few dishes had their satiety over 30%. Thanks to that, only 3~5 of the finest quality dishes could be eaten at the same time.

‘While the satiety and effects are highly effective, some of the ingredients are quite difficult to obtain.’

Ark looked at the few precious ingredients he had left and clicked his tongue.

‘These dishes are worth at least 2 gold.....’

In this situation Ark had no time to worry about the expense of the meal. Anyway, thanks to his cooking the stats of the special attack corps rose by a large amount. But was that all? Using ‘Blade Maintenance’ and intermediate Laundry also increased his attack and defense. Just like a thief, Ark learned special skills which put his buffs on a level similar to Lariette's. Shambala checked the secondary effects window and murmured in an astounded voice.

“What on earth? It's the first time I've seen such a jumbled up character like you.”

“I also wonder about my identity.”

Ark replied with a grin. Once he finished the corps' maintenance, they descended the hill and approached Ageiron. They had left the skyrays while approaching. If they approached Ageiron on the

skyrays then it would instantly be a beehive. From here onwards it was infiltration time. They paid attention and hid when necessary.

“The question is how to reach the world tree undetected.....”

Shambala looked at Ageiron with a frustrated expression. Ageiron was the headquarters of the Nakujuk. Just like bacteria proliferating, there were a huge number of Nakujuk. Although they were residents of the city, 70% of them consisted of warriors. The sky was already turning dark and the edges of the full moon could be seen in the sky. While Ark, Shambala and Yapsab who changed his profession to ‘Guardian=Scout’ could use ‘Stealth,’ it wasn’t something that could be used indefinitely. The duration time was 20 minutes so there was no guarantee that he would be able to remain undetected.

“Huhuhu, it’s time to show our skills.”

The rehabilitation members smiled and approached the front.

“Yapsab, sneak into Ageiron and determine the most common items.”

Yapsab used Stealth to roam Ageiron and then returned to Tazza. Then he roughly drew on the ground and explained.

“It’s the keg. They look like barrels to store wine. They were scattered everywhere.”

“A keg? Good.”

Tazza nodded and took out several pieces of wood and tools from his bag. Then he sawed at the wood and hammered away until he created 8 keg barrels.

“Now everybody please enter the keg.

Ark put on the wine keg and a message instantly appeared.

-The Nakujuk's wine keg has been reproduced using 'Clone.'

When using household goods to imitate hostile forces, a 'camouflage' effect is applied. Once 'camouflage' is applied, you will not be suspicious to hostile forces.

If the opponent shows an interest in you then the 'risk' will increase. 'Risk' will increase if you show certain suspicious behaviours in certain situations.

Tazza had the 'Counterfeit' skill that he used in the past. After changing to 'Guardian=Engineer,' he managed to learn the 'Clone' skill.

"Feng Shui!"

After Jjak-tung said this an information window appeared again.

-The effect of Feng Shui is applied to the party.

Feng Shui is the unique skill of the Guardian=Strategist.' Using Feng Shui will increase resistance to all environmental and terrain effects. Attacking an enemy from a high place will increase your damage while attacking from a lower place will halve it. In addition, if you hide your body in the darkness then the chances of being noticed by an enemy will decrease.

'The combination of professions is as good as expected.'

Ark once again admired the variety of skills in New World. But Ark also didn't fall behind when it came to odd skills.

“Now it’s my turn. Dedric, satellite surveillance mode!”

“Okay!”

Dedric floated 100 metres into the air at Ark’s command and looked around.

“In front.....there is a watchtower on the left and right..... One lookout in each tower.....this can’t be ignored..... And there are Nakujuk patrols wandering around the buildings and alleys.....each one 50 metres apart.....moving in a clockwise position.....”

The information that Dedric relayed was displayed as red dots on Ark’s map. This was a new skill Dedric learned during the Nakujuk’s war.

-Your pet Dedric has learned a new skill.

Satellite Surveillance Mode (Beginner, Species Characteristics): You can observe the terrain for 50 metres and the enemy’s movements within a 100 metre area. When the skill proficiency rises, it is possible to scout even further. The information relayed by your summon will also be displayed on the map. However, once activated the skill will consume 5 mana every 10 seconds.

Thus Dedric was consistently forced to use the satellite surveillance mode. Although Ageiron wasn’t a huge city, it still wasn’t easy to understand the intricate alleys of the city even with the keg’s limited vision. In addition, there was a high probability of the Nakujuk noticed the kegs when they were moving around. They needed to understand the terrain and the enemy’s movements. That was the main purpose of satellite surveillance mode.

“Now let’s sneak into enemy territory.”

The 8 kegs moved towards Ageiron.

Do do do do.....

“Stop! A patrol is approaching the corner.”

Ark whispered in a low voice before entering Ageiron. The special attack corps stopped moving and held their breaths inside the keg. After a few seconds, 10 Nakujuk turned around the corner. They surveyed the area and murmured as they saw the wine barrels.

“Eh? Who placed some wine barrels here?”

“Hmm, I suddenly became thirsty after seeing the kegs.”

-Risk: 20%

‘Hik, t-these bastards! Just go away!’

Ark prayed the Nakujuk wouldn’t look through the hole in the barrel. Luckily one of the Nakujuk slapped his colleague’s shoulder and spoke.

“Hey, do you want to get in trouble for drinking alcohol while on the job? Instead of doing it while on patrol, you can drink when there is a break.”

“Okay, okay. I just wanted to try out the keg.”

The Nakujuk looked at the barrel before turning away. When the patrol officer backed away, the risk level instantly went back down to 0.

‘Phew.....that bastard, if you’re just going to go away then why did you make us terrified for nothing?’

The special attack corps released the breaths they were holding and started moving again.



Do do do do, flinch! Do do do do, stand! Do do do do, slam!

The infiltration using the kegs was smooth. Ageiron had many buildings that seemed like they belonged in large cities. The topography made it easy to avoid the enemy's eyes. In addition, there were a lot more kegs once they entered the interior so the risk level hadn't risen. Every time they saw the Nakujuk, they would wait anxiously until the patrol went away.

'Isn't it exciting?'

Didn't it feel like they were sneaking around in the action game Metal Gear Solid? Observing the enemy's movements and the terrain using the mini map and then sneaking around was quite exciting. After sneaking through the enemy lines for approximately 20 minutes, the special attack corps arrived at the first gateway. The barrels huddled together near the checkpoint to the next district.

"This area has a lot of watchtowers so it'll be very dangerous."

The most annoying thing while sneaking through enemy territory was the watchtowers. NPCs in the watchtower had an incredibly wide surveillance range and anybody using stealth within that range would have it automatically turned off if the guards looked at them. In fact, as soon as the special attack corps entered the range of vision the risk level immediately went up to 50%. The guards would definitely notice them if they tried to sneak past. There were also 10 watchtowers in the vicinity of the checkpoint.

"But the watchtowers aren't completely dangerous. If you stick close to the wall while moving then the only risk is another watchtower spotting you. But the watchtowers' line of sight won't overlap in the towers at 3 o'clock, 4 o'clock or 6 o'clock."

"We can't move forward like this so we'll have to handle it."

Shambala said in a low voice.

“Fortunately 3 of the watchtowers are at an appropriate distance. The both of us should take the ones at 3 o’clock and 4 o’clock, while the one at 6 o’clock has a low risk so Yapsab can take care of it.”

“You’ll have to take care of it while the guards in the other towers are looking in the opposite direction. Do you have confidence?”

“Who are you talking to? You idiot.”

They had to defeat the watchtowers in order to infiltrate the city. The only way to disable a watchtower in enemy territory was assassination. Shambala was more of an expert in this field than Ark. Ark laughed and nodded his head.

“Okay, let’s get started. Please maintain ‘Trill’ the whole time. I’ll tell you their movements.”

Thus 3 kegs approached the watchtowers. They stopped whenever a patrol approached and continued this until the 3 kegs arrived at the place where a ladder to the watchtowers was. Meanwhile Ark surveyed the mini map and calculated the timing. Because the situation in the watchtowers couldn’t be seen from the kegs, they had to solely rely on Dedric’s satellite mode.

-Shambala, the lookout has turned his head to the right.

-I saw it. By the way.....it sure is comfortable with your bat. Why don’t you give your bat to me?

Shambala teased as he agilely climbed up while the guard was looking away.

-I wouldn’t give him for anything.

-Lousy child.

-Let’s stop chatting and prepare yourself. Now. None of them are paying attention.

“Radun, poison attack.”

Ark jumped out of the keg while using ‘Stealth’ and muttered. Radun spat out a green liquid onto his sword. At the same time Ark matched Shambala’s timing and jumped onto the watchtower. Then he used backstab on the guard looking over the checkpoint.

-You have dealt a critical hit!

The poisoned guard stiffened and fell to the floor. There was a reason he used the paralysis poison. If the guard screamed for help then it wouldn’t be an assassination anymore. Ark followed up with the continuous use of Dark Blade. The guard’s health decreased in an instant. But after a while the guard’s paralyzed mouth loosened enough for him to call for help. However, Ark continued striking critical hits and making the guard paralyzed. Ark was level 300 and thanks to his dark attribute bonus, he only needed 15 seconds to deal with the Nakujuk. Ark quickly took care of the guard and turned his head, feeling slightly conceited. However, Shambala had already taken care of his lookout.

‘Sheesh, that brat.....’

Ark complained with pouted lips. He had grown like crazy in the Netherworld. Now even Jewel and Duke couldn’t handle him. Thanks to that, Ark’s ego inflated and he had thought there was a considerable difference between him and Shambala. However, the difference didn’t seem that much anymore judging by how fast Shambala took care of the guard.

‘Although Shambala is a profession assassin.....’

Nevertheless it didn’t feel that pleasant. Then suddenly there was an exclamation mark on the map as a red dot moved. The red dots represented the Nakujuk and the exclamation mark represented a danger. Ark stared with aghast eyes as a Nakujuk arrived at the bottom of Shambala’s watchtower.

-Shambala, right below you at 7 o’clock!

At the same time, Shambala's pupils turned in that direction. Then Ark stared with a slack jaw as a dagger suddenly drove through the Nakujuk's mouth.

It was Shambala's 'Dagger Throwing' skill! The Saint Assassin was primarily an assassin profession who could use poisons, daggers and swords. The poisons were even more powerful than the ones produced by Radun! The Nakujuk became stiff and rigid after the dagger hit him. Shambala then jumped off the tower like a gymnast and drove his sword through the top of the Nakujuk's head. The assassination damage was added to the fall damage and a tremendous amount of damage appeared. The Nakujuk was in a 'stunned' state and couldn't even cry out as it died.

'What, what a scary guy....!'

He marvelled at the quick workmanship. It was lucky that he was Ark's ally. He would truly be frightening if they were enemies.

-Let's withdraw quickly.

They hid the bodies in the watchtower and quickly camouflaged themselves again. Ark had confirmed that the watchtowers could see each other. If the other lookouts noticed something unusual then there would be a problem. While Ark and Shambala took care of the front two watchtowers, Yapsab had taken out another lookout and joined them. The rehabilitation members smirked as they spoke to each other.

"Huhuhu, wasn't it easier than you thought?"

"At first I was a little worried but it's not that difficult."

"Don't be careless. If we're discovered before we reach the world tree then it's over."

But honestly, Ark was also feeling a little relaxed. Just like the rehabilitation members said, it was easier than he thought. After becoming more experienced with moving in the kegs, their speed became even faster.

"Wait, someone is approaching."

Do do do do, flinch, smash!

Once again the 8 kegs froze at Ark's voice. After waiting a moment, a ten year old Nakujuk boy turned the corner.

‘What the? It was a kid?’

Ark sighed and relaxed. He naturally thought that kids were less dangerous than soldiers. It was a huge mistake. A child was even more curious than adults. And a child was someone whose actions could never be predicted. As expected.....the child suddenly stopped next to the wine barrels and stared.

-Risk: 50%

The risk level had risen to 50% after the boy showed an interest.

‘What, what the? What are you looking at? There's nobody here. Just go!’

Ark stared at the boy and sent strong thoughts to him. But as expected, the child's behaviour was impossible to predict. The boy suddenly hooked stabbed his finger through the hole in the barrel. Who the hell would stick a finger in a barrel sitting in the streets? No, there was no time to consider this. It was impossible to imagine that the finger would stab into Ark's eye, making him give a short scream as he fell down.

“Kuaaak, what, what the?”

“Huk, g-ghost!”

The boy also freaked out and fell on his rear. It was at that time. The Nakujuk patrolling nearby focused their eyes on the kegs as they heard the scream.

-Risk: 100%

“O-oh my god.....!”

Ark groaned as he looked around with a swollen eye. Shambala rose from the wine barrel and glared at Ark.

“Thank you. You stupid brat!”

“Hey, you try to be quiet when you’re being stabbed in the eye. Of course I would scream! Damn, that child.....!”

Ark’s bloodshot eyes sent a murderous glare towards the boy. Then the boy winced and retreated behind the Nakujuk soldiers.

“Ark-nim, please stop. Despite being a Nakujuk, he is still a child.”

“You idiot, you’re going to take revenge on a child?”

“Ark, let’s act like an adult.....”

Ark turned his head away at Lariette’s, Shambala’s and the rehabilitation members’ words. It didn’t matter if they were an adult or child to Ark. However, there was no time to worry about the kid.

“Damn, let’s get out of here at once!”

Ark led the special attack corps and ran down an alley. The terrified boy suddenly changed his face and laughed.

“Kekeke, intruders. You stupid guys, you’re all dead now. Yes, we’ll tear those guys apart and eat them. In particular that bastard who frightened me, I’ll eat your eyeballs!”

The young boy continued chattering rudely. Thanks to him, the special attack corps was forced to flee. How was this child brought up? He really wanted to see the parents’ faces. No, the parents were chaotic NPCs so wouldn’t they praise him?

“Ark!”

Ark’s useless thoughts stopped after hearing Shambala’s shout. Ark reflexively turned his head around and paled with fear.

“That.....there he is!”

Have you ever been attacked by an enemy in Starcraft? Have you ever received a rush attack by 200 troops? In a situation where there were only eight of you? That was how Ark felt just now.

“Intruders. Kill them!”

“How dare they try to break into Ageiron!”

An enormous number of Nakujuk were emerging from the surrounding buildings. They numbered in the hundreds.....! It was the first time Ark had experienced being surrounded by so many monsters in New World. The square and narrow streets suddenly became filled with Nakujuk. Then the many Nakujuk shot swords, spears and arrows towards the special attack corps.

Kwa kwa kwa kwang, seokeok, snap, crunch!

The special attack corps instantly became 8 tattered rags. There was no time for them to stop or even block.

“Healing Touch, Goddess’ Protection!”

Although Lariette used her recovery magic, it was like water just spilling out of a hole.

“Lariette-nim, switch to the set of 3 defensive buffs!”

Raising the damage would be no help in this situation. Enduring was the most important thing. Lariette activated the defensive buffs at Ark’s command and raise their stamina, defense and evasion. Then she used her recovery magic again as the rate they were losing health at slowed down.

“Healing.....aaak!”

Lariette burst out screaming while using her recovery magic. Her healing and buffs made the enemy’s aggro rise. Thus the Nakujuk concentrated their attacks on Lariette. Of course, Bul-kkun and Ddeok-dae who changed their profession to ‘Guardian=Assaulter’ used taunt to get the aggro off her. But there were still surrounded by hundreds of Nakujuk. The two of them were unable to protect Lariette from the whole group.

‘Lariette-nim will soon be wiped out!’

Ark threw the Saw blade towards her and shouted.

“Undo transformation. Razak Shield Stroke!”

Clack clack clack, clack clack clack clack!

Razak fell in front of Lariette and swung his shield. The group of Nakujuk was pushed back.

“XX Interception!”

Meanwhile, Ark stabbed his sword at an incredible pace around Lariette. Yes, Ark hadn’t been idle while Dedric and Razak were learning new skills. He learned a new skill thanks to his steady efforts.....that



name was XX Interception! This was the technique that had managed to defeat Kaljapeu, and Ark changed to nature of the technique while attacking the Nakujuk and finally managed to learn the skill.

-You have learnt a new skill.

XX Interception (Beginner, Active): a special lunge which concentrates the attacks on a specific area. When using XX Interception on certain monsters, your repeated attacks will increase the target's fury and change the focus of their anger. This particular area is extremely painful so their attack speed will also be slowed. The pain will reduce their movements.

"U-ugh!"

"What, what? This unfamiliar pain.....?"

"Euuugh, it seems to be tearing!"

"Ah.....I didn't go to the toilet this morning....."

The Nakujuk screamed when he struck their X spot. The Nakujuk's bums started swelling when X was hit. The pain the Nakujuk felt every time they tried to move couldn't be described in words. But that wasn't the effect Ark aimed for. The Nakujuk felt shame and anger after their X was attacked and they burned with intense hostility towards Ark. It was a 'forced Taunt!' Thanks to Ark attacking X, Lariette was able to escape from the crisis.

".....This lousy bastard!"

"What's wrong with fighting dirty? Flash!"

Ark passed through the group of Nakujuk and dealt damage to them. However, the situation was still bleak no matter what skill he used. The top right corner of the mini map was completely filled with

colour. The red dots representing the Nakujuk covered the entire map in red. Even if his health managed to endure, they wouldn't be able to defeat all the Nakujuk before the defense buffs ran out.

“Ark, this way!”

Then he heard Shambala's voice from the rear. He saw that Shambala had defeated his group of Nakujuk and was climbing onto the roof. Being attacked on the roof was better than being surrounded by the Nakujuk on all sides. Ark stepped on the wine barrel on the ground and jumped onto the roof. Then he pulled Lariette and the rehabilitation members up. It would be easier to fight on the roof. The terrain reduced the advantage in numbers. But the situation looked even worse thanks to their wider field of view from high up. It wasn't just the alley the special attack corps were in. Thanks to the emergency call, the whole area was strewn with Nakujuk.

‘We're screwed, it's all finished now!’

They couldn't run away. If they ran away here then the world tree wouldn't be revived. But it wasn't possible to advance either. There was only on the outskirts of Ageiron so the number of Nakujuk would multiple as they advanced further. The fate of the special attack corps was about to be decided.

“Ark, jump!”

Jjak-tung shouted at that moment. When Ark turned around with a stupid look, Jjak-tung raised his hand and indicated the next gateway.

“There. You might survive if you manage to get there!”

“Huh? But.....”

“There's no time to explain. It isn't possible to survive for much longer in this state!”

How the hell would they be able to survive in such a situation? But there was no other way so Ark followed Jjak-tung's words for the moment and ran towards the gateway. They jumped from roof to roof while avoided the arrows until the special attack corps arrived at the next gateway. There were no

roofs around the gateway so they jumped off and crossed to the gateway on the ground. But the situation became even worse. Hundreds of Nakujuk had flocked in front of the second gateway.

400, 500, 600, 700.....the number of Nakujuks had grown exponentially.

“Jjak-tung hyung, how the hell.....?”

“Run!”

“Huh?”

Jjak-tung, Yapsab and Tazza shouted before turning their bodies around. Ark stared at the scene with astonishment. He could guess Jjak-tung, Yapsab and Tazza’s intentions. They intended to block the advancing enemies using the gateway. However, their professions were strategist, engineer and scout. They wouldn’t even last 30 seconds when surrounded by hundreds of Nakujuk.

Then Jjak-tung smiled and clenched his fist firmly.

“Slime’s Time, NO1!”