

Ark Vol 15 C 2

Chapter 2

ACT 2 Find the Forbidden Ingredients

-You are Oberium's saviour!

-Praise the hero!

The soldier ghosts lined up in front of the barracks and raised their swords. Then the crowds of resident ghosts gave shouts of joy.

-Ark-nim, hooray!

-Hooray for Hero Maban's descendant!

He only discovered it later, but the skin of the dead was nothing but a container for the soul. When Karma swallowed their souls, the residents of Oberium were released from their restraints. Thanks to the purification, the skin of the dead was shed. Ark looked into the eyes of the ghosts. The eyes of the ghosts who escaped from the curse looked like a cartoon character. The sparkling eyes of the ghosts really didn't fit the situation. Anyway, all of this was thanks to Ark defeating Karma. The King remembered Ark's voice from when he used Miracle Nursing. After everything was put in order and Buksil and Baekgu came from the outskirts of town, they naturally got the hero treatment. Buksil looked at the sea of cheering ghosts and muttered.

"Hehehe, do you see? You're a hero."

"Don't you have any shame?"

"Huh? What is it?"

"Didn't you come running to receive the heroic treatment?"

“Why are you talking like that? Why shouldn’t I have done that?”

Buksil was dissatisfied with Ark’s cold words and complained.

“Ark-nim managed to pass safely through the crypt because I supported you with my eyeball. In addition, who was the one videotaping while I accompanied you?”

Baekgu naturally nodded along.

“Yes, you really would’ve been in trouble without my Master’s eyeball.”

Ugh, he didn’t have anything to retort to that. He definitely knew that he would fail without the eyeball.

“Ugh, as expected you’re the only one who understands. Baekgu.”

Buksil and Baekgu tearfully hugged each other. They really like to sit down and play. While Buksil and Baekgu were angry at him, Ark had no energy to waste on such trivial things.

‘I have to finish organizing things here. Now all that’s left is.....’

Ark looked at the King with eyes that shone even more than the ghosts. It wasn’t his intention but Ark had finished Karma and lifted Oberium’s residents from the curse they suffered for hundreds of years. Wasn’t that a heroic deed? So he should receive compensation according to his heroic deeds. The ghost king seemed aware of Ark’s attention and approached.

-You did something really important.

“You’re overpraising me.”

Ark deliberately answered. Although he was their hero, there was no need to show off too much. At such a time, modest was more suitable. It was natural that his image would rise favourable with the NPCs. The ghost king then continued with the words he expected.

“No, no. It is not too much praise. You’re actions are deserving of that praise.”

“You don’t have to go that far.....”

-You still don’t understand what you have done for us. You can’t even imagine. You can’t imagine how painful our existence was for hundreds of years. We spent that whole time in endless despair.

The King looked down from the balcony with a painful expression. He had sat on the throne for hundreds of years and looked over the ruins of Oberium. When Oberium was cursed by the Rwigenberg, the King sat on his throne and cried tears of blood as he watched the end of his kingdom. The rage, despair and guilt boiling in his heart caused the King to be caught by the dark aura and he became that dishonourable existence. He stayed on the throne and saw the same image for hundreds of years, causing him countless pain. It was the really dreadful part of the curse magic. The King’s haunted voice as he gave the explanation made even Ark solemn.

-Although the curse has been released, that pain is still fresh in my heart. No, my sense of guilt has deepened even more after remembering everything.

“Then what I did.....”

Ark’s insecure expression made the King laugh and shake his head.

-You don’t have to make that expression. A King whose kingdom falls to ruin must naturally accept the pain. If I can’t withstand the pain then my citizens won’t be able to stomach it either. Now the curse has been released. The dark aura which bound us is gone. Although I want to give you some compensation for saving Oberium from the darkness, I don’t have anything to give.....

Ark had sincerely felt anger at the darkness which invaded Oberium. In the end he managed to defeat the darkness but he couldn’t even receive a single cent? When he heard the story about the dark curse,

he had felt sincere anger. But no matter how angry he was, he couldn't return the treasure they lost. Then the King murmured something like he was thinking aloud.

-If there was treasure left then I would be able to compensate you properly.

'What the? Now you say that? Is that right?'

Ark frowned and stared at the King. It was obvious that the King couldn't afford to give even one penny. Ark had been full of expectation and suddenly deflated.

'Damn, saying such useless words....well, it's not possible. Anyway, I didn't do it with the intention of saving them.....I should just be satisfied with this good feeling.'

Ark sighed and scratched his head. Anyway, he wasn't going to receive any compensation for this situation. Although he would usually feel angry, looking at the ghosts he couldn't feel that emotion.

-Ah, that's right. There is that method!

Ark had half way given up but his eyes once again widened at the King's words.

'Oh, what the hell? This reaction? Should I expect something? There must be something even though the place is ruined!'

Ark looked at the King with eyes sparkling with expectation. But he was surprised at the King's next words.

-In fact, Oberium had the custom of burying the dead warrior's equipment with them in the crypt. The location of the crypt was a secret and unaffected by the darkness so it should be untouched. It's been hundreds of years but it might still be worth a look. The ancestors will understand the handling of grave goods if it is for this purpose, so I'll release the seal on the crypt right now.....

"W-wait a minute!"

Ark shouted like a person running from fire. The riches contained in the crypt? Hadn't Ark already robbed all of them? The crypt currently bore Ark's mark all over it. Just like Buksil had drawn on the grave stone in the swamp, Ark had also tried the same thing in the crypt. And the only person who has recently visited Oberium was Ark. If the King found such traces in the crypt then it would be tiring. If it was discovered, Ark's reputation as a hero would fall! In the worst scenario, there was the possibility that the Oberium ghosts would turn into enemies.

'Besides, the grave goods became new after being affected by Karma's time magic. If they were taken away.....no, it can't be!'

When Ark suddenly exclaimed, the King instantly tilted his head to one side.

-What's wrong?

"T-that is....."

Ark stuttered for a while.

"You've seemed to have misunderstood something."

-I misunderstood? What is it?

"It's true that I saved Oberium. But I was only acting upon Hero Maban's will and never wished for a reward. Of course, I couldn't possibly decline if I was offered compensation. But I'm not a shameless person who would take away someone's burial goods. Please listen to my words."

"Yes, Ark-nim is absolutely not that type of person. Receiving the burial goods of people who have already passed away? People who would steal things like that are trash. Don't you agree Ark-nim?"

Buksil laughed and shot a sharp glance at Ark. Although his blood pressure rose, Ark awkwardly laughed and nodded.

“T-that’s right. I never hoped for a reward for my assistance.”

Racard, Buksil and Baekgu all made expressions like they wanted to vomit at Ark’s shameless words. This place was Razak’s hometown so he just sighed from the corner. But the King couldn’t understand and just nodded with admiration.

-You really are Hero Maban’s descendant! Yes, Hero Maban was just like you.

The King murmured with an expression like he was recalling some memories.

-Although my memories are fragmented after I died, I still have some remaining. Before my kingdom ceased to exist, I took great pride in its military. It was good enough that people of the next generation would remember our honourable fight against the darkness. After this city became ruins, no one dared to visit here where the cursed magic overflowed. Unlike my expectations, we have been forgotten by history.

“.....”

-But only one person. There was one person who remembered us. Hero Maban..... He didn’t forget about us. He dedicated his life finding a method to save us. All his attempts ended in failure and he disappeared somewhere.....

Ark’s face changed at the King’s words. Hero Maban had sacrificed his life to save the abandoned souls!

‘Money was power’ was Ark’s motto but he felt a deep emotion that was new after listening to the King. It was pride that he inherited Hero Maban’s profession.

“I can’t tell you in detail but Hero Maban was here until he died.”

The King nodded at Ark’s words.

-Yes, it is something like that. It isn't necessary for you to say that, we already know that Hero Maban tried everything to save us. If the dark forces weren't opposed here then we wouldn't even go down in history. Our souls would've been corrupted from the regret and fallen into a rage. The reason our curse was released and we recovered our memories is because of Hero Maban. He will remain a real hero in our memories. Therefore we can't feel regret that we fought against the darkness.

"And this is the descendant of the respected Hero Maban."

Buksil whispered as he looked at Ark with pitying eyes. After hearing such words, Ark also became a little embarrassed. Anyway, the King turned his head and looked at the soldiers lined up. The soldiers nodded with a look of pride. Then the King caught Ark's hand and said.

-Yes, I finally remembered. I'll give you a reward fitting for Hero Maban's descendant.

"Huh? A reward? The problem is....."

When Ark made a confused expression, the King shook his head.

-No, it's not a material compensation. Hero Maban gave everything to save us and you didn't hesitate to help us either. One day, you will fight against the darkness. We would like to achieve the honour that we couldn't accomplish in the past.

Suddenly the King's hand that was holding onto Ark heated up. At the same time, there was a ringing sound and the information window appeared.

-Thanks to 'Pursuit of Truth,' you have acquired a new lore skill.

* 6,000 fame is needed to acquire this skill.

'A lore skill!'

Ark's eyes popped out the information window. Pursuit of Truth was the addition effect of the title 'Seutandal's Hero' that he received from Isabel last time. There were people who passed on secret techniques all over New World. He had forgotten about it after the title was received but he never imagined he would receive it in a place like this.

-Originally the royal family of Oberium made a contract with our ancestors to summon them. That is why the Dark Lord feared us. However, we're now ghosts so the contract doesn't work anymore as it is only between the living and the dead. Now that we are ghosts, we can help you using this method. Of course, you might lose some fame for making contracts with ghosts but please accept our sincerity.

If he learnt the skill then it would cause problems to his fame. He had to pay using his fame to learn the skill.

'But that skill consumes 6,000 fame.'

Ark currently had 11,825 fame. It was more than half of the fame he had gathered so far. He was a little hesitant but when would this opportunity come again? Furthermore, fame had no special meaning for Ark. If it was for learning new skills then there was no reason to refuse.

'I can't completely grasp the skill just from the King's explanation but it is easy to gather 6,000 fame. It is very likely that it is a strong skill.'

"I don't really care about the eyes and ears of the world so it is an honour to accept. You said you didn't accomplish any glory in the past but that isn't true. Thanks to the sacrifice of honourable warriors, everybody is now living in peace. No matter what the world thinks, I consider you a true hero. How can I decline everybody's enthusiasm?"

It was beneficial. Ark's actions were sufficient to light a fire in the ghosts' chest.

-Oh, thanks to you we've gained a new life!

-We'll commit our lives to Ark-nim!

The crowd of ghost soldiers kneeled down and shouted. When the King released their hands, the back of Ark's hand had a shiny seal carved. It was a shield with swords crossed through it in a X shape. It was the crest engraved on the chest of the ghost soldiers. The crest shone for a short time before it disappeared and the information window appeared.

-You have learnt a new lore skill.

Secret arts, Ghost Knight Corps (Special, Beginner, Active): A contract with the dead within Oberium- with this summoning contract, 30 ghost knights can be summoned. The ghost soldiers will attack random enemies for 5 seconds before disappearing. The ghost knights will deal physical damage and will be resurrected if they die. When the proficiency increases, the damage of the ghost soldiers will increase even more. However, summoning the ghost knights will consume spiritual power.

<30 Oberium ghost knights will be summoned for 5 seconds. Cool down time: 24 hours, Spiritual Power consumption: 300>

Summoning Ghost Knights! It was a skill where the ghost knights would be able to attack enemies for 5 seconds! It was a sort of wide area summoning skill.

'Summoning the knights costs 300 Spiritual Power but my pets don't consume Spiritual Power anymore so it doesn't matter. It is better that it consumes Spiritual Power instead of mana.'

In addition, the attack was different from other wide area skills. For example, Flash was a wide area skill which dealt a base damage of 100 to enemies. However, it might not deal 100 damage because the skill would miss. In the end, it was better to use Dark Blade to finish an enemy. However, 'Ghost Knight Corps' is a skill which summoned the ghost knights. A troop of 30 knights would either attack one by one or concentrate the attacks on one target. In other words, it was different from other wide area skills because it could be used in a 1 on 1 situation or 1 against many..... No, it was even more powerful in a 1 on 1 situation.

"Thank you!"

Ark exclaimed as he grasped the King's hand. He hadn't received any compensation but his uncomfortable feeling had gone away. No, this skill was a reward beyond his expectations.

-We are pleased that you're happy with our feeble help. The King nodded his head with a pleased look. So Ark finished the arrangements with the King to his satisfaction. Just as Ark was saying farewell, some ghosts approached with an awkward face.

-Your Majesty, a problem has occurred.

-A problem?

-Yes, in fact.....

The soldiers gathered in the area and pointed. It was towards the dead merchants who had changed into ghosts. However, they all had fearful looks in their eyes. Then they gathered around Ark and the King and clamoured away.

-Your Majesty, it is those items.

-Those items?

-When we were cursed, these are items that we managed to scrape together. But after Ark-nim fought with Karma and sealed his magic in there, the items are emitting an eerie aura and can't go near it.

The merchants floated in front of Ark with a haunted expression. After sealing the demonic magic within the japtem, he had completely forgotten about it. It was probably because the ghosts could feel it that they instinctively feared the items.

'Don't tell me they want me to pay for it?'

That was what Ark worried about. Then the King snapped angrily at the merchants.

-What about it? Are you asking him to take responsibility for it?

The merchants flinched and quickly shook their head.

“Ah, no. Did we say such a thing?”

-But the fearful items are everywhere that we’re scared to walk around.

-Yes, please get rid of that horrible stuff.

-Hmm, the sealed items are definitely very dangerous for us who are souls. It won’t be hard to destroy but that might release the magic.....if that happens then the curse magic might be resurrected as well. But we’re souls tied to Oberium.....

The King heard the circumstances and murmured in a concerned voice. Ark then spoke with sparkling eyes.

“I’ll take care of it.”

-You?

“Yes, I’m not influenced by the sealed magic. If you give me the items then I’ll leave it in a safe place.”

-Ohhh that’s right, you’re the one who sealed the items so it won’t be a problem for you. How about it?

-Please. I beg you to take those horrible things away.

‘Huhuhu, the japtem fell naturally into my hands.’

Ark inwardly laughed at the merchant's answer. The sealed items were fatal towards the ghosts. But to Ark.....no, it wasn't dangerous even for ordinary users and NPCs. Of course, it did absorb the demonic magic so who knew how it had changed? Would he be able to sell it as scrap iron anywhere? Well, if the stores wouldn't buy it then he'll just throw it away.

'Anyway, I've learnt the summon Knight Corps skill so I should raise my intimacy with them.'

Ark took the japtem and increased his favourably impression. However, his mouth widened when he picked up an item. He never expected that such a treasure would be found among a pile of junk.

-Cursed Old Sword

Weapon type: One-handed sword

Damage: 7~10 (+ 50)

Durability: 8

Weight: 45

User Restriction: Level 250

The sword used by ancient warriors of Oberium. However, the sword has absorbed the demonic magic and changed its nature. The enchanted magic within the sword has enough energy to destroy an opponent. At the same time, the sword's durability has weakened because of the magic. In addition, the user will be affected by the curse and will receive constant damage until it is released.

* Cannot be repaired, reinforced or enchanted.

* Due to the effects of the curse, the user will receive 50 damage every 10 seconds.

-Cursed Old Shield (Magic)

Armour type: Steel Shield

Defense: 30 (+250)

Durability: 7

Weight: 30

User Restriction: Level 150 Warrior

The shield is so old that it is difficult to expect anything from it. However, the shield has absorbed the demonic magic and changed its nature. When the unstable magic within the shield is attacked, the magic will be released and damage the attacker. At the same time, the shield's durability has weakened because of the magic. In addition, the user will be affected by the curse and will receive constant damage until it is destroyed.

* Cannot be repaired, reinforced, enchanted or cannot be unequipped.

* Due to the effects of the curse, the user will receive 50 damage every 10 seconds.

'Heok, damage +50? Then wouldn't that be 57~60 damage?'

Ark's eyes popped out like he was Buksil. Ark currently used a rare two-handed sword. Gwisal's damage was 40~50. But the damage of an ordinary one-handed sword was even higher than that. Of course, it wasn't all good. The curse decreased the durability down to 8. In addition, repairing it was impossible. But was that all? It couldn't be unequipped and the user would receive 50 damage every 10 seconds. That was 300 health in 1 minute. In 10 minutes it was 3000! If a user only had 3000 health then they would die after 10 minutes. It was literally a cursed sword!

‘But it also depends on how you use it.’

It only had 8 durability so swinging it a few times would destroy it. In other words, it would break before his health would run out. Of course, the damage received in the meantime wasn’t small but it would deal tremendous damage to the enemy. Then he could change the sword freely during a fight. If he was fighting multiple enemies then he could use the sword for damage until it broke.

‘No, it doesn’t need to be that complicated.’

Ark could use Blade Storm to explode it. The more powerful the sword, the stronger the damage of Blade Storm would be. However, swords with a lot of damage were expensive so he couldn’t normally do that. But it was different if the sword wasn’t able to be sold anywhere else. In addition, the damage was suitable for a rare sword. The curse sword also had a demonic attribute. If he used such a sword with Blade Tempest then the damage would be unimaginable. The cursed sword was worth 30 swords! It was similar to Ark loading 30 missiles at the same time. And the sword would break through the defense!

‘This is a great item to throw away.’

It was unlikely that he would be able to buy a curse item like this at the store. The item couldn’t be repair and it damaged the user when equipped so it would be impossible to sell to general users. But now a japtem worth a few silvers was more useful than many items.

‘It’s a jackpot!’

Ark was in a condition where his eyeballs rolled back. Then something popped into Ark’s head after packing the cursed item away.

‘Wait? Doesn’t the nature of the items change when magic is sealed in it?’

And Ark had the skill to seal demonic magic in items. The Eternal Soul stage 2 skill ‘Demonic Sealing!’

‘Can’t I reproduce these items after I encounter a monster with the demonic attribute?’

If he could make cursed weapons out of japtem then the effectiveness of Blade Storm would increase by 200%! He could produce missiles using japtem and monsters with the demonic attribute. Well, monsters with the demonic attribute aren’t that common..... While Ark was mulling over Demonic Sealing’s new uses, he was also packing the japtem. He found every piece of japtem in Oberium and approached the King.

“I’ve collected all the cursed items.”

-Thank you. Now the curse is gone from Oberium.

“Then I’ll take this and go. Please stay healthy.”

-Healthy.....that isn’t something a ghost often hears.

“Ah, is that so?”

Ark scratched his head with an awkward expression and the King smiled.

-Anyway, thank you again. Good luck on your journey.

So Ark received the ghosts’ farewell and prepared to leave Oberium. Suddenly Razak pulled at Ark’s sleeve, causing him to stumble.

Clack clack, clack clack clack clack.....

“What the? What is it?”

“This guy says that he wants to ask the King something.”

“He wants to ask something?”

Ark looked doubtfully at Razak after Racard’s interpretation. Razak hesitated before murmuring something again. Razak wanted to ask something about his past. Once again, Razak didn’t remember anything except for the fact that he was a knight. Although Oberium was purified after Karma was destroyed, Razak hadn’t recovered his memories like the other ghosts. So he wanted to understand why he was resurrected as an undead in the underground jail. Although Anguradon had told him not to dwell on the past, he started to feel greedy after the other ghosts in Oberium recovered their memory. After Razak said that, Ark also became curious.

“That reminds me.....perhaps you know something?”

However, the ghost King shook his head.

-I don’t know. Because many people were jailed at that time.

Razak sighed at the King’s answer. Then the King thought for a while and talked again.

-But there is one thing I know. Since ancient times, Oberium has always left a special marker on the body of someone who committed a violent crime. The mark isn’t able to be erased even if the person dies and only bone is left. There are no such markings on your body so you’re not a violent criminal. It is most likely that you are a nobleman or knight who violated a martial law and was imprisoned.

“No, it’s still not sure. What if the bones are changed?”

Clack clack? Clack clack clack clack!

Racard looked at Razak with suspicious eyes and muttered. Then Razak ran towards Racard and swung his sword. The King watched the two of them and spoke apologetically.

-I’m sorry I wasn’t more help.

Ark laughed and nodded.

“Please don’t worry about it. No matter Razak’s past, he is my summon now.”

At that moment, Razak stopped running after Racard. Then he looked at Ark with wide and sparkling eyes. Then Buksil stroked Baekgu’s head and imitated Ark.

“Baekgu, despite your past you are my dog now.”

“Yes, Master. Baekgu is happy.”

“Sheesh, it’s not funny.”

Racard kicked a stone and curled his lip.

“Dark blade!”

The sharp, sparkling sword split the space. The blood of the Mould Zombie splattered and it stumbled and withdrew. At the same time, a black flame like energy emerged from the sword and seemed to expand further.

“Not yet!”

Ark flew about the area and fired Dark Blade continuously. Every time it swung, the black aura gradually became larger until there was a spark. When the spark happened, the sword started ringing in his hand.

“Okay, now. Dark Strike!”

Ark threw his body and forcibly swung his sword.

Kuaaaa! Kwakwang!

The black aura concentrated on the sword exploded and smashed into the Mould Zombie. The black aura was wrapped in an intense spark! The Mould Zombie lost 30% of its health with one blow and the zombie scattered in all directions. If the damage was higher than the monster's remaining health then it was an 'Over critical' attack.

"This is it, this is it. This exhilarating taste!"

Ark looked at the dispersed body of the Mould Zombie and laughed. The technique he used was the once he received when he switched profession, 'Dark Strike'. 'Whenever he used Dark Strike, the dark aura would charge until it dealt an unbeatable strike! Currently Dark Blade was an advanced skill so he could only charge it 4 times. 50% damage was added every time so four charges was +200%! In addition, Dark Strike had a higher chance of a critical hit than Dark Blade. When hit directly, a level 300 Mould Zombie lost 30% health. But more than anything, Ark really liked the feel of the blow in his hand.

'This addictive feeling is no joke.'

The sword would vibrate whenever the dark aura was charged! The feeling when the dark aura exploded was exhilarating! It was also exciting whenever he dealt an 'Over Critical' hit on the monster. Although Ark normally used Gwisal's sword, it was interesting fighting with Dark Strike. That wasn't all. He gained four profession-specific skills after changing to his 2nd profession. It was Dark Strike, Dark Tempest, Dark Scale and Moonlight Illusion! Because he received four profession-specific skills at once, Ark felt like it was fun to test all of them.

"Master, behind you!"

At that time, he heard Racard's voice from the other side.

Kuaaaa!

When he turned around, he saw 5 Mould Zombies running towards him. At the moment, Razak stood in front of Ark and raised his shield. Ttadadadang. Three Mould Zombies went flying when struck by the shield.

“Well done, Razak.”

Clack clack, clack clack clack clack!

Razak began to laugh (?) He nodded his head. Thanks to his two summons Racard and Razak, Ark was able to unleash 100% of his battle capabilities. Racard analysed the area and dispersed the enemies properly. Meanwhile Razak stayed behind Ark and prevented any surprise attacks. This was Ark's original battle method. He hadn't understood until there was a vacant place. Ark was always with them so he had forgotten how big a role his pets played. But after he was parted with them for one month after Seutandal was raised, he realized how big of an existence they were. For the first time since he changed to Dark Walker, Ark felt true affection for his pets. That change in feelings was instantly applied to the system.

-Razak is delighted with your wholehearted praise.

‘Huhuhu, the stats can increase like that as well.’

Previously he had no interest in affection but now he knew that it could raise the skill proficiency. In a way, that stat was more important than strength or stamina. Racard pouted and complained after hearing Razak being praised.

“Me? Me? Didn't I inform you quickly?”

“You also did well. As expected from the number 2!”

“Hehehe, isn't that right? Right? As expected from Master.”

Racard continued rattling on. It was another good point of having two summons. If he called two at the same time then there was a burning sense of competition. That tendency had become even worse after their evolution. Therefore their combat capabilities improved even more when there were two of them.

“Bring it on, Razak’s cousin. I am the number 2!”

Racard unleashed Taunt on 30 Mould Zombies while Razak jumped all over the place and swung his shield. It wasn’t necessary to say that their presence made the battle a lot easier.

‘I’ve caught around 140 so far?’

Ark calculated it in his head while fighting. The disinfectant was necessary when fighting the Mould Zombies. Before arriving at Oberium, the disinfectant lasted for one hour and his best record was 100 zombies. Now that Razak was here to help, he killed an average of 160. That was a 60% improvement! After switching professions, he received bonus stats and new skills and he had his summons to help as well. This made the battles a lot easier.

‘My combat capabilities are at 100% thanks to Dark Soul and my summons. Should I return to the campsite and put things in order?’

“Racard, drive the zombies this way!”

“Okay!”

Racard flew around and taunted the zombies. After moving around, he managed to line up 30 Mould Zombies. Ark knew exactly what technique to use.

“Well done, you’ve gathered them properly. Jump!”

When Ark activated ‘Wolf’s Feet,’ the muscles in his thighs grew. Ark leaned his upper body forward and shot off like a bullet. The power of ‘Dark Blade’ was condensed in Ark’s sword which flew forward. It was the technique ‘Adol’ which combined Jump and Dark Blade. Ark’s sword penetrated through the Mould Zombies.

Chwa chwa chwa chwa chwa chwa!

The sharp sword ripped through flesh and bone. The 30 Mould Zombies bounced away in different directions.

“Flash!”

Ark then continued with ‘Flash.’

Previously he hadn’t used Flash because he couldn’t control where his body would go in the swamp when he moved like a flash of light. After cooking an ‘Immunity to Poison’ dish, the toxic swamp wasn’t a problem. After repeating Adol and Flash a few times, more than half of the Mould Zombie’s health disappeared.

“Okay, Racard and Razak! Now it is a slugfest. Concentrate on one location!”

“Hehehe, I’ve waited for this!”

Clack clack clack clack, ttadadadak!

Razak and Racard gathered around Ark. Despite steadily eating food, Razak and Racard had only reached an average level of 280. They’ve learnt combat skills from Ark but their level was less than the Mould Zombies. However, it was different when Ark used a battle formation that had him in the middle. When it was ‘ $1+1+1=3$,’ the battle could change by 5 or 10 degrees! Ark and his summons removed the Mould Zombies one by one.

Kuaaaaak! Pepepeng!

Finally the last Mould Zombie was shattered with Dark Strike and the long battle ended. When he first started the battle, he had 60% experience and now it increased to 100%.

-Your level has risen.

“Yes, I levelled up!”

Ark cheered and checked his character information window.

Character Name Ark Race Human Alignment Good +500 Fame 5825 (+500) Level 349 Profession Dark Soul Title Cat Knight, Oberium’s Caretaker, Jackson’s Hero, Great Adventurer, Magic Institute Member, Seutandal’s Hero Health 6555 (+225) Mana 6495(+25) Spiritual Power 400 Strength 725 (+38) Agility 885 (+110) Stamina 1,105 (+35) Wisdom 161 (+15) Intelligence 1,123 (+5) Luck 15 (+60) Flexibility 158 Art of Communication 66 Affection 89 (+10) Resilience 436 Special stat: Knowledge of Ancient Relics 153 * 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

*

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

Wolf’s Feet (Shoes): Agility + 40, Movement Speed +40%, Attack Speed +10%, ‘Jump’ is 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

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

Ark's Ring (Ring): Strength + 5, Agility + 5, Stamina + 5, Wisdom + 5, Intelligence + 5, 'Sudden Increase in Power' 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 50% in the dark

- * You have the ability to hide in the darkness (30 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%.

- * Skill points: 70

'Hrmm, it is as wonderful as I expected.'

Ark laughed as he looked at the information window. After changing to Dark Soul, his various stats had ascended. But after a short time, Ark sighed and shook his head.

'The problem is levelling up. It took a full day to gain half a level?'

Ark smacked his lips and looked at the information window with regret. After fighting Karma and leaving Oberium, Ark had risen from level 346 to 349. It was 3 levels. But it had already been one week since he had left Oberium. Even though Razak increased efficiency by 60%, he was constrained by the duration of the disinfectant and his levelling speed fell by half of its previous rate. The reason was due to his level.

In New World, users received 10% bonus experience per 5 levels when fighting monsters higher levelled than them. Of course, the opposite also applied and there was a penalty of 10% every 5 levels when the user is higher than the monsters. When there was a difference of 50 levels, they would receive no experience or items. It was a system to prevent high levelled users from staying in lower levelled areas. Currently Ark was level 349. It varied slightly but the Mould Zombies had an average level of 300. Ark would only get 10% experience at most from now on.

‘Now it is only 10%. If my level increases again then I would get experience or items.’

When considering the situation, he couldn’t allow himself to level up. It was the first time he was worried about being too high levelled.

“I have to find the necessary ingredients before that happens.....”

Ark muttered as he pulled out his dismantling knife. Yes, the reason Ark was using the disinfectant and fighting the Mould Zombies for one week was to obtain the ‘Skin of the Dead’ and ‘Heart of the Dead.’ It was better to obtain the ingredients in a place overflowing with zombies. Of course, there were a few areas on the continent where the undead was present. However, the level of the zombies Ark saw was even lower than the Mould Zombies. He wouldn’t experience a penalty to his experience and not collect any ingredients or items. He had heard rumours of places where the undead was stronger than the Mould Zombies but the distance was too far and they were too high levelled. Facing just one or two would be too much for him.

‘No matter how strong the undead, they can only give one ingredient of each type. With higher levelled monsters, my extractions skills are only intermediate so it would likely fail and take several months to finish collecting them.

So Ark decided to hunt the Mould Zombies. However, it had been one week since he had changed professions and he only gained 3 levels so he was feeling a bit frustrated.

‘But there is no other way. I have to collect all the ingredients before I reach level 350.....’

Ark sighed and moved the dismantling knife. But after dismantling 160 zombies, he only gained 30 ingredients. Thanks to his level difference, the probability of items dropping had decreased.

‘Phew, I still need to collect 300 more.....so I have to fight like this 10 more times? Furthermore, I can’t stop my level from increasing.’

Ark confirmed the items in his bag and sighed. Then Razak and Racard who had been waiting in the campsite muttered.

“Master, when are we eating? I’m hungry enough to die.

Clack clack clack, clack clack clack clack.

“Hungry? Ah, that reminds me....”

Ark checked the gauge floating on the top right and nodded. Thanks to the duration of the disinfectant, he was unable to take a break after the battle started. After using it twice and fighting for 2 hours, his satiety had fallen to 40%. Ark received a penalty when it dropped below 50%, but he was fighting a weak enemy so he felt he didn’t need to worry about it.

‘Why isn’t that guy coming?’

“Ya, Buksil!”

Ark shouted at the eyeball floating above the campsite. Then the eyeball fell to the floor and rose again before replying.

“Ouch, yes? Huh? You called me?”

“What, were you sleeping when I was fighting?”

“Ah, no. I’m working really hard to gather the ingredients.”

When Ark looked doubtful, the eyeball shouted angrily. The place Ark was hunting the zombies was on the outskirts of the swamp. There was a reason he intentionally fought the Mould Zombie there. There was a time limit for hunting so he had no reason to go deep into the swamp. And another reason was procuring food. Of course, it was possible to find ingredients in the swamp. However, the swamp ingredients weren’t that good or numerous. Including his summons, there were 5 people in Ark’s group. It was difficult to feed five people just relying on the ingredients in the swamp. Now that Ark had Baekgu to easily find the ingredients, he left the supply of ingredients to Buksil. So Buksil would gather the ingredients while Ark was fighting. While Ark set up a campsite and hunted, Buksil looked for ingredients within the range of the safe area. In fact, previously he never imagined that Buksil would be able to gather ingredients in a place where 300 monsters were rampant. But now Baekgu who was a Wolrang warrior could play the role of a bodyguard.

‘Well, the efficiency hasn’t increased that much.’

Ark glared at the eyeball. Buksil seemed to always head to a place out of Ark’s line of sight.

“I’m telling the truth! I’ve been working hard gathering food. Think about it Ark-nim. There are three image windows floating in front of me. One eyeball is filming Ark-nim while the other one is filming me gathering ingredients. So can’t Ark-nim look at the video to confirm it?”

The eyeball clamoured tearfully. Well, he had no objections now that Buksil mentioned that.

‘However, I have to buy the ingredients that Buksil gathers so if he works too eagerly then I’ll be in trouble. It’s better for him to only gather the necessary amount.’

“I understand. Where on earth are you now? I’ve run out of supplies.”

“Eh? Already? I just dropped off 30 ingredients to you.”

“Everyone has already eaten it. Every time we finish a battle then we end up using 160 ingredients. So far I’ve been supplementing the missing ingredients with my own. But now my remaining ingredients have already fallen.”

“Hrmm, what do I do?”

The eyeball muttered as it moved left and right.

“I didn’t know that Ark-nim was lacking ingredients so I went to a place far away this time. It’ll probably take an hour if I return it right now.”

“Really? Did you obtain anything after going so far?”

“I did! And you’ll understand why. There are a lot of ingredients around here.”

“Ahhhhh, I’m hungry! Hungry! I can’t wait 1 hour! I’m hungry!”

“Shut up, are you a child?”

“Ya, I am a child. Does Master think that I’m an adult?”

The bat fell to the ground and transformed into a boy vampire before speaking. Well, he didn’t have anything to say to that.

“I understand. Just sit tight and wait. Buksil, I’ll settle it this time so hurry up and return.”

Ark grunted and started exploring the area. Ark had to feed his pets using his share of ingredients.

‘Sheesh, I’ve graduated from ingredient foraging thanks to Buksil....’

But as expected, it wasn't easy to gather ingredients in the swampland inhabited by the undead. The ingredients that appeared regularly were blighted fruit or suspicious mushrooms. Of course there were also plants that grew which counteracted poison. He could use the 'Knowledge of Poisons' he got from Food Worshipper to remove the toxins, but it would take too long and it wouldn't increase his satiety that much. It also had a completely horrible taste. It was the reason Buksil had to go to a distant place to gather ingredients. Apart from that, it was surprisingly difficult to satisfy his pets' taste.

'It can't be helped. I can't wait for Buksil while I'm so hungry.'

So Ark was forced to pick the trivial ingredients. He was picking the blighted fruit when his eyes saw something. An overweight mushroom could be seen.

'What the, that mushroom? There were mushrooms like that in the swamp?'

Although he hadn't checked the information yet, the appearance looked quite good. It looked like a Matsutake mushroom the size of a fist that noblemen enjoyed.

'Oho. This really might be a Matsutake mushroom.'

Ark ran to the swampland and gathered the mushroom. Then he checked the information window using Ingredient Identification with a strange expression.

-Monkfish Mushroom

A valuable mushroom that only grows in a special area.

* Advanced Additional Information: The Monkfish Mushroom has unique ingredients which makes it difficult to digest. It's to the extent that more calories than what is present in the mushroom is required to digest the food. So a person will become hungrier the more they eat. In ancient times, the nobility deliberately ate the Monkfish mushroom in order to eat more food.

"Eating this will make you hungrier?"

It was a truly ridiculous ingredient.

'Isn't celery considered the best diet food because eating it requires more calories than it gives?'

Ark truly had an abundant common sense. But there was no reason to diet in New World. It was pointless to decrease the satiety. He might've understood if it tasted good but it didn't.

"Despite its appearance, it isn't a plausible mushroom."

Ark was about to throw away the mushroom with a regretful expression when he suddenly flinched.

'Wait? The more you eat the hungrier you become?'

There was an intense spark in Ark's brain cells.

'This might actually be a huge ingredient.'

Ark instantly took out a pot and threw the Monkfish mushroom in. He put in drinking water and suitable spices and completed a dish.

-The Survival Cooking dish 'Monkfish Mushroom Soup' has been completed!

The Monkfish mushroom has been used to make a soup. However, the Monkfish mushroom cannot be satisfactorily completed with your current cooking level. Furthermore, the special effect of the Monkfish mushroom is to cause more hunger. Eating the soup might make you starve.....

"As expected. It is an extravagant ingredient!"

Ark exclaimed as he confirmed the effect of the dish. It was a strange mushroom which increased hunger. It was like a poison for a starving person. However, it would show an extravagant effect if he used it properly. It didn't matter when hunting the low level Mould Zombies but it would be extremely important for survival in the late level areas. He was able to increase his stats by eating several key foods. However, Survival Cooking had one weakness. When satiety reached 100%, it wasn't possible for him to eat anymore. Survival Cooking dishes had some of the best effects but it also increased satiety by a lot. He could only eat 5~6 dishes before eating the limit. But what if he could decrease satiety? If it was like that then he might be able to reach the limit of 10 dishes. Of course, satiety would increase more depending on the effect. For example, the 'Great Buffalo Steak' increased his strength +25 but it also increased satiety by 80%. It was good if he was starving but bad if he wanted to raise stats.

"But it is possible to freely eat 10 dishes if I can decrease satiety."

He could eat 10 Great Buffalo Steaks! The added stat would exceed 100. Ark considered the mushroom even more valuable than japtan.

'I shouldn't worry about hunting the zombies anymore. This is an opportunity. Earlier the status window said that Monkfish mushrooms only grew in special areas. In other words, the Monkfish mushrooms grew somewhere in this environment. If he was lucky then he might find a mushroom garden. Where is it?'

So far, it had been a fortnight since he had entered the swamp and Oberium. However, he had never seen the Monkfish mushrooms in the meantime. So Ark carefully looked around the swamp for the Monkfish mushrooms.

"The swamp on this side is cloudy."

The swamp flowed downstream and upstream. The fact that the Monkfish mushroom flowed downstream meant that there were some upstream. Ark hurriedly gathered the ingredients and returned to the camp. He created simple dishes to fill the stomach of his pets.

"Okay, follow me!"

"Eh? I haven't even digested my food yet so where do you want to go?"

Racard extended his thick stomach and frowned.

“Noisy! Buksil, you follow too.”

“Where on earth are you going?”

Ark replied with a wicked grin.

“To look for the forbidden ingredients.”

It was a food ingredient which caused hunger. It was an affair involving ingredients. In other words, it was the finest special ingredient which made it possible to show his full power.