

## Ark Vol 15 C 4

### Chapter 4

#### ACT 4 The Phantom Hourglass

Kuaaaa!

The nails of the Mould Zombies aimed at his neck. The deeply rotted nails gave off a bad stench! Ark reflexively dodged the Mould Zombie's attack. He avoided the nail, turned his body and kicked. The Mould Zombies ran into the wall and stumbled. After combining Sword Mastery with kicks, his movement skills had increased by leaps and bounds. The Mould Zombie that was hit stiffened and became 'Stunned.' Even if skills that contained mana were blocked, he had used 'Eyes of the Cat' beforehand to find the weakness of the Mould Zombies to cause the 'Stunned' state.

Kwa kwa kwa kwa kwak!

He swung his sword like a rapid fire gun and pierced through the Mould Zombies. Black blood dripped from the holes in the zombie as it stumbled.

"Master, the next fellows are coming!"

Then he heard Racard's voice from behind him. He turned his head and saw 5 Mould Zombies running.

"Razak!"

When Ark raised his voice, Razak who had been taking care of other zombies came running. He raised his shield and pushed two Mould Zombies. Meanwhile, Ark ran up to the remaining three and used sidekicks. The Mould Zombies who had been kicked flew back several metres and slammed into the wall. However, the zombies just opened their mouths after landing and ran after him again.

'The saliva!'

The Mould Zombies in the dungeon weren't that high level. The difference with the swamp zombies was that the cave ones had poisonous saliva. The Mould Zombies spat their saliva and Ark rotated on the axis of his left foot, and did a 360 degree spin kick. The jaws of the zombies snapped shut as the saliva gushed out from the side. That wasn't all. The neck of the Mould Zombies rotated after being kicked. The zombies couldn't grasp the direction because their heads were on backwards and wandered around crashing into walls.

'It's a lot easier now that my body is moving comfortably.'

Ark laughed as he looked at the Mould Zombies wandering around with their heads backwards. It was incomparable to Ark's movement a few days ago. The conversion of sword and kicks increased his reaction rate..... He could feel the difference in his body after his physical ability rose. But the outcome of the training wasn't simply his performance. Over the past few days, Ark had sealed his skills and only trained in his physical abilities. It was all because he wanted to defeat the dungeon. However, his training ended up different from his original intent and brought an unexpected result.

'I never even considered it. The issues of only relying on skill-based battles.'

Skill based combat was straightforward and convenient. It was unnecessary to explain. If he used his skills then he could dispose of the Mould Zombies in less than a minute. However, using generals would only take 3 minutes or 2 if he dealt a lot of critical hits. The battles were longer so of course he lost more health and it took a lot more time to restore it. That's why Ark had mainly been using skill based combat. However, he had forgotten one thing while focusing on the speed of using skills.

Ark's primary attack skill was Sword-Hand combat. Since he mainly used skills, his Sword-Hand combat was unable to increase in proficiency. And Ark's Sword-Hand combat was advanced. If he didn't reach any special enlightenment in the related skill then it was impossible to increase beyond advanced. But that changed after he started to use Sword-Hand combat in battle again. Although he initially faced 3~4, he was eventually able to face 6~7 opponents. If he faced more than 10, his life was really in the balance. But even if he was in a critical condition, Ark never used any skills. Even if he died, he wouldn't use skills. If he was in a crisis then he would quickly escape. This was the training he decided on. Practicing martial arts was a hundred times better than skills. These weren't techniques that could be easily learnt. In the midst of a crisis, he used martial arts techniques.

Japan's legendary swordsman, Miyamoto Musashi was the originator of modern kendo that was based on a three stage level. Modern kendo had 9 stages of qualification but they wouldn't be a match against Musashi. The reason was clear. Modern students practiced in a safe environment and was no match against someone who polished their skills risking their lives. The explanation was slightly redundant,

once Ark made a decision he decided to carry it through. If he wasn't positive about it than nothing would be done! That was Ark's philosophy. Even if Ark was facing a huge mountain, he stuck to his resolution of only using his sword and kicks. After fighting at the Evil Silrion, his Sword-Hand combat had been stuck at 500 but it finally broke through.

-The proficiency of Sword-Hand combat has risen after a lot of experience.

Sword-Hand Combat (Master, Passive 503/1000): You have become a Master in Sword-Hand combat.

You have completely understood the special qualities of the sword and you are able to draw out its performance by 100%. You have received additional damage when using a sword or knuckle, and your evasion and critical hit has risen considerably. In addition, there is a 20% chance of fully understanding the attributes of the sword.

\* Master additional effect (Deferred Strike: There is a 20% to deal double damage with one strike. The second damage will only have 50% of your base damage.

'Sword-Hand combat has reached the Master stage!'

Ark's mouth opened as he confirmed the information. Overall combat ability increased by 50%! It wasn't simply that his damage had increased. It meant that all his combat capabilities including defense, attack speed and reaction rate had increased! Ever since then, Ark felt like it was easier to move his body. In addition, his probability of causing abnormal states had increased. But he was able to feel the effects of Sword-Hand combat increasing thanks to Deferred Strike.

Understanding the characteristics of the sword gave him a chance of dealing double damage! It didn't seem that wonderful when reading the information window. It dealt two attacks but the second one only did 50% of his base damage. It was better to use Dark Blade. However, using it was completely different from the explanation. It had a 20% probability. That was one in five strikes. But that was only simple probability. Just because there was a 1/6 chance of landing a 6 on a die didn't mean the six would appear. The six could come out but it also might not come out. There was also a 30% or 40% chance of throwing a 6. The odds might contribute more than 30%, 40%. That also applied to Deferred Strike.

“Now!”

Ark ran up to the zombies who had their necks twisted and swung his sword. There was two ringing sounds as the zombies were struck twice and their health drained out. Although there was only a 20% chance, the odds of Deferred Strike occurring increased by leaps and bounds in this situation. If his first attack was a critical hit which dealt 150% damage then the second strike would deal 75% damage. That was 225% damage with one strike.

“If their necks are twisted then it is easy to deal a critical hit!” Ark rapidly stabbed the Mould Zombies and they tore apart like sandpaper. The zombies were successively cut by the critical hits and Deferred Strike!

The Mould Zombies became like a rag and collapsed. Meanwhile, Razak and Racard who had survived the hell training disposed of one of the zombies and approached the other one.

“Now, hit it hard with the shield!”

Clack clack clack clack!

Racard and Razak worked together to attack the zombie. This was also the outcome of his hell training. Ark’s pets also didn’t use skills and now they were able to battle against level 400 zombies. Their abilities were equivalent to level 280 but it was possible to defeat the zombies if it was 2 against 1. In this situation Ark’s pets could hold their own so he was quite satisfied.

‘If they can handle it then it is better not to interfere.’

Ark relaxed and watched the battle between his pets and the zombie.

“Hahaha, we won, we won!”

Racard cheered as they finally defeated the Mould Zombie after 4 minutes.

“You still have a long way to go. You have to be able to defeat one in 2 minutes.”

“Sheesh, would it hurt for you to give a compliment?”

“I’ll give you a compliment when you finish it in 2 minutes.”

Ark smiled at Racard who grunted. Anyway, it was different from his initial worries and he steadily ventured into the cave. There were many Mould Zombies so his progress wasn’t fast, but Ark’s purpose wasn’t to clear the dungeon. Yes, his first goal was to collect the necessary ingredients for his Necromancer’s essence.

‘I have almost all the materials.’

In addition, the Mould Zombies in the cave was level 400. He received 200% experience every time a zombie was defeated so his level increased quickly. After a few days, he gained 8 levels and reached 357. It was four times the speed of his hunting in the swamp. However, the regeneration of the Mould Zombies in the cave was slower than the swamp so it was slightly regretful.

‘But clearing the dungeon would become even more difficult if the regeneration speed of the Mould Zombies was fast.’

Even though he could deal with 10 Mould Zombies without using skills, he still had to use the disinfectant. Because of the duration of the disinfectant, he had to repeatedly invade the cave and then retreat. If the regeneration speed of the zombies was quick then it would take three or four times his current speed.

“This will soon come to an end.”

Ark muttered after scanning the map. He used his cartographer skill to reveal that the map was 95% cleared. He could use the disinfectant one more time so if he was quick then he could clear the dungeon.

“Okay, let’s go.”

Ark had recovered his health using food and stood up. After taking care of the Mould Zombies in the area, he once again entered the cave. The effects of the disinfectant would end in 20 minutes. Ark followed the single passage until he reached a dead end.

“Eh? What the?”

Ark stared with bewildered eyes at the dead end. He came all the way here only to encounter a dead end? Well, he originally came here to search for the Monkfish mushrooms. However, he still hadn't found any of the mushrooms. Even though he searched the wall, he couldn't find a hidden device. Instead, he discovered a pool of deep black water in a corner.

‘Wait, if the Monkfish mushroom grows in this cave then wouldn't the water make it flow into the swamp?’

And there was black water on the floor throughout the cave. The place that water was coming from was the pool.

‘That stagnant water should connect to where the water is being supplied from. The puddle might be connected to other places.’

“You guys follow me.”

Ark plunged into the pool of water without hesitation. Nothing was visible in front of him once he entered the black water. Ark used his hand to check the around the pool. After a short time, he felt where the current of water was flowing. It meant the current of water was coming from somewhere!

‘Over here!’

Ark pulled out a stone and the current of water reversed. Ark took a deep breath before diving back down and following the waterway that had been formed.

‘I have to reach the top. The place where the tunnel emerges will be clear!’

“Puah!”

He swam upwards and breached the surface of the water. Ark took a deep breath and looked around. The place where Ark came up was a side wall in a pool where a underground waterfall was flowing into. The water from the pool seemed to be flowing into the swamp via the cave.

“There’s no doubt. The Monkfish mushrooms is somewhere here.”

Ark exited the water and checked the underground space. He had no mana to use Eyes of the Cat so he couldn’t see the environment clearly. However, his eyes gradually adapted to the cave and he was able to grasp the approximate shape.

‘Is this place like a mine?’

All the walls of the underground was formed from a type of black rock. After rubbing his hand against it, a black soot that seemed like coal streaked his hand. While crossing the cave, he often saw a coal like rock. The water that ran through the cave seemed to be black because of the coal dust that had fallen. Then Racard who was flying ahead shouted.

“Master, mushroom, mushroom!”

“Ah, is it the Monkfish mushrooms?”

Ark shouted with joy and rushed in Racard’s direction. Was that the mushrooms near the lump of coal? It was the Monkfish mushrooms that Ark was looking for! The Monkfish mushrooms were present in the gaps between the coal.

“Hahaha, it is a jackpot!”

Ark raised his arm and instantly picked the mushroom. He didn’t rest and picked the mushrooms but they showed no signs of decreasing. The Monkfish mushrooms had a tremendous effect when used properly. Even if he called Buksil and Baekgu then it wasn’t possible to collect all the mushrooms.

“If it’s like this then it can be used.”

As long as there was enough mushrooms then he would have a constant supply of it. This meant he could catch high level monsters faster. Ark scraped the mushroom one by one as he dreamed of a pleasant hunt. The mushrooms gradually piled in his bag.

-This fellow dared to dirty my refuge!

A deafening roar shook the space and a red warning message appeared.

-The boss monster Immortal Lich ‘Karad’ has appeared.

‘Eek? Boss monster?’

Ark flinched and turned his head. Something wrapped in a black aura walked into the dark space. Karad wasn’t a skeleton or a zombie, but he looked like an undead monster when some bones exposed. He was covered with a hooded cloak and was holding a long stick. The outfit was just like a magician. In traditional fantasy, a lich was a magician who became corrupted in their search for immortality. Before Karad was an undead, he had been a magician.

‘Boss monster..... Thank you.’

A satisfied smile spread on Ark’s face as he hurriedly got up and took an attack posture. ‘Boss monster=big rewards’ was the formula in Ark’s head.

‘I found a large supply of mushrooms and now there’s even a boss monster!’

He was grateful to the dungeon. Of course, he didn’t like all of the situation. Due to the special effect of the cave, Ark couldn’t use mana. As well as his attack skills, he didn’t have enough mana to use Eyes of the Cat to determine Karad’s level and weaknesses.

‘But the opponent looks like a magician.’



He had fought Jewel in the Evil Silrion and Seutandal until he was bored. Therefore Ark was well aware of a magician's weakness. A magician had low defense and slow reaction rates. Instead, the attack power of their magic was incredibly strong but it took time to complete the spell which was also a weakness. If the magician wasn't given any time to complete the spell then they were a weak opponent.

In his current state, he might be a match for a magician.

'Of course, he can still use Warp.....'

Luckily the underground area wasn't wide. Even if Karad used Warp, there were only a few places he could go. Ark had confidence that he could kick the boss before he completed any strong spells.

'I also have my summons as well.'

If he arranged his pets in the directions Karad could warp to then he could interrupt the spell casting.

'I have magic resistance so I can ignore low ranking magic and move forward for close combat.'

Ark completed a rough strategy plan.

-Death for intruders.....!

Karad stretched his hand and cast a spell and black magic arrows flowed out like a rain shower.

'That's a huge number. I can't avoid everything. If that's the case.....!'

Ark hid his face and neck with both arms and went running forward. If he took that posture then the damage wouldn't decrease. However, if he covered the head and neck then he decreased the chances of a critical hit. Ark's health quickly went down as he was hit by the magic arrows. However, the damage wasn't that much compared to how many times he was hit. His magic resistance had increased thanks to the Mongoose immortality pills.

“Racard, Razak, spread out to both corners!”

Ark approached Karad and shouted. Ark arrived and prepared just in case Karad used Warp. As expected, Karad instantly chanted the spell for Warp as Ark ran up. Warp was a teleporting skill but it was impossible to designate the location. He appeared in the right hand corner and prepared to use the magic arrow skill again. But Razak was there with his shield and used it to stop the spell.

“Good job, now take your time and attack with your shield!”

Clack clack clack, clack clack clack clack!

Razak subsequently used his shield to prevent Karad from using Warp. Nevertheless, it was impossible for Razak to take care of a boss by himself.

-You impertinent skeleton!

Karad swung his cane and Razak flew back a few metres. Karad then started chanting a spell. However, Ark had already rushed towards Karad before the spell was completed.

Pepepepeng! Snap!

His sword penetrated the body. He continued with a flashy spin kick. Karad stumbled as he was hit on the temple and retreated. Ark didn't miss the opportunity and kicked out in rapid succession. A magician had to chant in order to use magic so 'Stun' was more useful than other abnormal states. As he expected, Karad was unsteady and couldn't remember the chants.

-Ugh, y-you.....!

Karad used the gap in his attacks to once again disappear with Warp.

“Everybody be alert!”

Razak and Racard glanced around carefully at Ark's command. After a while, Karad's form was once again seen. But this time, he was lucky and moved to a back corner. Ark and his summons were waiting in the opposite direction.

"Sheesh, Racard stop him!"

"U-understood!"

Racard flew towards Karad. However, this time Karad was slightly faster.

-Take this you dirty intruders. Dark Arrows!

"Aaaaack!"

Black magic arrows flew from the hands of Karad. Racard screamed as he was hit by the magic arrow and fell. Meanwhile, Ark once again ran through the arrows but was too late to prevent Karad from using Warp again. If Ark couldn't stop Warp then he wouldn't be able to deal with Karad. It was even worse since he couldn't use skills. However, Ark wasn't alone.

-Hahaha, I'll let you regret attacking me from hell!

Magic.....

Daeng kang!

-Ouch!

Karad stumbled as a shield hit him on the side of the head. This time Razak had appeared in front of Karad.....The battle was Karad was like a lottery. If he appeared near Ark or his summons then Ark would dominate. Conversely, if Karad appeared somewhere else then he would dominate. No matter

how quickly Ark ran, Karad would be able to use magic then escape with Warp. That continued for 20 minutes.

“Huk huk huk, Radun used Stalking to determine his tracks.....”

Ark muttered while being short of breath. If the magician escaped using Warp then Radun can figure out the location using Stalking! It was the skill which caused Jewel despair. But as expected, Ark couldn't use Stalking. He didn't have enough money. Eventually someone had to collapse. Ark and his summons were exhausted after running and flying around for 20 minutes. In addition, he received damage running after Karad and only had 30% health remaining. In addition, their magic resistance was low so Racard and Razak were in a critical condition.

‘But Karad’s health is also low.’

Ark looked for Karad again as he disappeared using Warp. He willingly submitted to being hit by a few shots of magic when approaching Karad for the chance to land a few kicks and cause an abnormal status. Even if he was a boss monster, Karad was a magician so Ark dealt a lot of damage to him. Karad had broken bones here and there that were hanging out of his flesh. Although he couldn't see the monster's status using Eyes of the Cat, he was able to approximately guess the remaining health. Ark guessed that Karad had 20% health at the most.

‘If this continues then I can win!’

Ark was convinced of that. Then Karad once again appeared on the opposite side. The distance was approximately 50 meters!

‘Damn, guess I need to get hit again.’

Ark used his arms to protect his vital areas and ran towards Karad. It took approximately 4 seconds for Karad to chant the spell for Dark Arrows. When calculating the speed Ark could run 30 metres, the spell would definitely be completed. But this time the spell wasn't completed by the time he arrived. Ark lowered his arm with a doubtful look.

-.....The power of resurrection!

Karad finished chanting a long spell and opened his eyes wide before shouting. Then the broken bones were reformed and the tattered pieces of skin stuck together again. Karad's body was being recovered at an absurd rate.

"What, what the.....?"

Ark stopped with surprise as Karad smiled coldly and muttered.

-Kukukukuku, what's with that expression? Did you think you could kill me? I am an immortal Lich. It is impossible for you to knock down this body! Take this, Dark Arrows!

The magic arrows repeatedly hit Ark's body. After being hit by dozens of magic arrows, Ark lost his balance and fell to the ground. He received a critical hit and he lost 8% health, but that wasn't the problem. They had fought for 20 minutes and had finally managed to get Karad in a critical condition. In exchange for that, Ark had lost 70% of his health and his pets were in a critical condition. The outcome of that was Karad's broken bones and torn flesh. But now all that was recovered? What happened to the torn flesh and broken bones? When he checked Karad's state, he saw that the recovery magic was being gradually applied and wasn't an immediate effect. However, the recovery speed was fast and could be compared to that of a normal priest. It was likely that 50% had already been recovered. If he continued using Warp and recovery magic then how long would Ark last?

'Damn, being unable to determine the enemy's situation is bad. Is there a countermeasure to that magic? I need to either not give him time for the recovery magic or my attack power needs to exceed his recovery rate.'

That was impossible if Ark wasn't able to use any skills. In addition, he only had 20% health left and with no mana he had no chance of winning. If Karad could recovery then there was no way to survive. Ark shook his head forcefully.

'No, I can't die like this!'

Ark clenched his teeth tightly and swung his sword.

-Huhuhu, don't you know that's useless?

However, Karad instantly used Warp. Ark vainly hit the wall. His blade scratched against the wall like a flint and a spark flew up. His sword had hit a lump of coal so it was a natural result. But after that something unthinkable occurred. The spark touched Ark's sleeve and burst into flames.

"Heok, what, what the?"

Ark hurriedly withdrew and the flames faded away. Ark carefully looked at the arm where the flames occurred and understood the situation. While attacking Karad, he had got the coal dust on his arm. When the spark struck the powder, combustion happened and a fire occurred.

"Damn, that was surprising."

Ark cried out with irritation and turned his body. Had he breathed in too much coal dust while fighting Karad? Then an idea came to his head when thinking about the spark causing flames.

'Wait? Coal dust? Maybe..... No, it is possible if it's in this space!'

"Razak, Racard, the coal!"

Ark suddenly raised his head and shouted. Racard who had been searching for Karad's location muttered with a strange expression.

"Eh? What are you talking about? Has all the coal dust affected your head?"

"That's right!"

"Then your head really is full of coal dust?"

"You fool, that's not it. Fill this place with coal dust!"

“What? Master. Are you sane? Won’t we choke on coal dust if this place is filled with it? Did you really go crazy? It doesn’t matter to Razak who doesn’t breath, but I have the soft vampire lungs! I don’t want to die because of this!”

“Shut up and just do as I say! Razak too!”

Ark shouted while frantically hitting the wall with his sword. After hitting it with his sword, Ark kicked the coal dust piled on the floor and scattered it into the air. Razak also hit the wall with his shield and sprinkled the coal dust.

“I’m going to die soon anyway so it doesn’t matter how it happens.”

Racard sighed and flapped his wings, causing a wind that scattered the dust.

-What, what the?

Karad looked at the exposed coal dust with confusion. He tried to see through the darkness and the coal dust but it wasn’t that easy to find Ark.

-You cheeky bastard, you think you can get away from me like this?

Karad yelled and blindly shot his magic arrows.

“Cough, cough, not at all. Cough, it’s just starting now!”

Ark’s form became visible within the coal dust. Although his mouth and nose was covered with his mantle, coal dust entered his lungs every time he breathed. In addition, it felt like there was gravel within his eyes every time he blinked. However, there was a vague smile of satisfaction on Ark’s face.

“Racard, Razak, jump into the pool!”

Ark shouted while running towards the pool, dragging his sword against the ground behind him.

Kararararang!

When the sword blade encountered the ground, sparks flew up. The sparks flew upwards and spread at an incredible pace.

“Now!”

Ark ran and plunged into the pool underneath the waterfall.

Flash! Kwa kwa kwa kwang!

There was a sudden bright glare and at the same time there was a loud roaring sound. Then a massive hot storm swept through the underground area. Kwa kwa kwa kwang, the rocks couldn't tolerate the heat and started falling. It was to the extent that the vibration even shook the water in the pool.

“Puah, it's a success!”

After a while, Ark emerged from the water and shouted.

“Puah, what, what? What was that just now?”

Racard looked around with wide eyes. In just a few seconds, the underground area had become a mess. The coal dust which filled the space just then wasn't visible anymore. The rocks on the ceiling couldn't endure the blast and fell to the ground, scattering in all directions and there were still some flames burning. The view was like the results of a bombing!

“M-Master, what type of magic did you use?”



“It’s not magic. Just science. No, isn’t it just basic physics and mineralogy? That’s it.”

Ark replied with a wicked grin. That’s right. Some people might have already noticed, but Ark had come up with a method to explode the coal dust! He would explain the dust explosion in advance. The very small particles floating through the air was in the range of the sparks and exploded. It was a typical example of a coal dust explosion. It never happened in these days, but explosions at coal mines in the 70’s wasn’t that rare. He had remembered learning about coal explosions during school. As expected, people learned from seeing things.

‘But I didn’t think it would work like this.’

“I didn’t know it would be that extreme! Huhuhu, then that fellow’s bones would be.....heok!”

Racard was laughing when he turned around and screamed. Ark’s face turned to follow Racard’s gaze and hardened.

-Ooooooh.....t-that bastard.....you arrogant human.....!

Karad stood in the centre of a small fire and swayed. The body had become tattered after the explosion but it was still holding on.

“U-unbelievable..... He survived that explosion?”

Ark muttered with incredulous eyes. But Ark had overlooked one thing. Karad was a magician monster so he had incredibly high flame resistance. Then Ark’s ears heard Karad’s voice chanting a spell.

“This is the recovery magic he used before! Ah, no!”

Ark jumped out of the pool with an aghast face. If that guy used his recovery magic then his recovery rate would be faster than Ark could damage Karad. Eventually the situation would be like the coal explosion never happened. No, it would be worse. Karad wasn’t stupid so he wouldn’t fall for the same trick again.

“Summon Ghost Knight Corps!”

The space warped and the ghost knight corps appeared. But before the ghost knights could charge, Karad laughed and muttered.

-It's too late. The power of resurrection!

At the same time, Karad's body started recovering at a quick speed.

-Kill the evil!

The ghost knights rushed towards Karad at Ark's order. The 30 knights attacked with their swords and spears. Karad's body was torn every time he was attacked. However, the power of recovery was already restoring the flesh and bones. Although there were 30 knights, it was a low level skill so the attack damage was also low. Of course, 30 people were attacking so the damage was larger than the recovery rate. But they couldn't defeat Karad within 5 seconds.

-Sheesh, if only there was a bit more time.....

The ghost knights stared at Karad and disappeared. That was what Ark wanted to say.

-Huhuhuhu. Is that all? Do you have anything remaining?

Karad laughed after the ghost knights disappeared and looked at Ark. In fact, Karad wasn't in as good a situation as he pretended. After being pushed by the ghost knights, Karad was broken like tofu. After the attack from the ghost knight corps, Karad only had 1-2% health left. But the power of resurrection was still being applied. While Ark was staring blankly, Karad's health was still being recovered at an incredible speed.

‘Incorrect. It's over. My general attack can't keep up with his recovery speed!’

Ark sat down with a thud and sighed desperately. Suddenly a black form flickered on Karad's chest. At the same time, a message window appeared in front of Ark.

-Karad's health has fallen below 3% and you can extract the demonic aura.

'What? Demonic? Then that guy has a demonic monster?'

Ark suddenly raised his head. After his health had fallen below 3% thanks to the ghost knights attacks, the Demonic Seal skill was activated. If Demonic Seal succeeded, then the remaining health of the monster would be ignored and it would die. However, the power of resurrection meant that Demonic Seal wasn't automatically activated when it fell below 3%. Then Ark stood up and shouted.

"Demonic Seal!"

Chwajijijijik!

Instantly a bright light emerged from Ark's hand and penetrated the chest. Then the black aura which had been flickering on his chest flickered and emerged. The light was dragging it out. Then Karma started to harden into a jellified state.

-Kuaaaaak, you..... What did you do.....!

-You have succeeded in extracting the demonic aura.

Please select the target to be sealed into.

"That's it, Radun. Ancient Sword!"

Ssak ssak, ssak ssak ssak ssak!

Radun spat out the Ancient Sword from the underground crypt. Next the light moved to the Ancient Sword and it was absorbed into the sword.

-Demonic Seal was successful.

Thanks to the Demonic Seal, the attribute of the item has changed.

-Kuaaaaak!

At that moment, Karad screamed and was torn apart. After a short while, the rotten flesh changed and a vague form rose from Karad's body. It was Karad's soul which had been trapped in the body after he changed into a Lich. He seemed to suffer from a pained head for a while before it slowly raised. With white hair and beard, he seemed like one of the Oberium ghosts.

"Were you a magician of Oberium?"

-That's right.

The ghost magician who had been confined to Karad's body sighed and answered. Just like the ghosts of Oberium, Ark's intimacy with Karad was at 100% after freeing him. So Ark could receive answers to his many questions from the ghost magician. As Ark expected, this was originally a coal mine. But one day, something strange spread from this coal mine. The miners working in this place lost all their willpower and the incident spread. The Lord of this region sent people to investigate the incident- before falling under the curse, this area belonged to the Lord of Oberium- and a magician was dispatched for the investigation.

-After descending down here, I released it was the legendary Mana Hall.

"Mana Hall?"

-Yes, the Mana Hall is a place which can manipulate the source of mana and there are two types of Mana Halls. One Mana Hall releases infinite mana while the other Mana Hall absorbs the surrounding

mana. The Mana Hall which exists deep in this place is the 2nd type. In some rare cases, the power of the Mana Hall is emitted to the outside but this Mana Hall has dwelled under the earth for a long time.

The magician instantly told the Lord of the investigation results. At that time, the forces of Oberium was preparing for war against the forces of darkness. After the Lord heard this news, he ordered the magician to find a way to utilize the power of the Mana Hall. If they could control how mana is sucked out then it could be used against the forces of darkness. The magician who received the order instantly closed the mine and began to study it.

“Did you find a way?”

Ark asked with curious eyes but the magician shook his head.

-With my knowledge, it wasn't possible to find a way to handle the great forces of nature. Even when the miners dug the soil, it lost its power the moment it exited outside.

There seemed to be some restrictions on this power.

-But then I found something unexpected. I discovered a stone that could absorb the magic even though it looked the same as other stones. After investigating the stone that could absorb the magic of the earth, I discovered that it was a Hearthstone.

‘Hearthstone!’

Ark's eyes flashed. He had obtained a socket item from the Magic Institute. Ark had found a Hearthstone in the territory of the vampire Lord but he couldn't find anymore. He was seeking more Hearthstones so it was natural for Ark's eyes to light up at the information. But before Ark could dig for more information, the magician sighed and shook his head.

-But.....

The moment the magician touched the Hearthstone, the curse magic was activated in Oberium. The strength of the curse magic was enormous. The abundant earth was changed into a swamp with a rotten

smell. All the living beings caught in the curse became the dead wandering the earth. Ark suddenly had an idea while listening and asked.

“Then all the undead within the swamp were also residents of Oberium?”

Then shouldn't Demonic Seal have been triggered when he killed the Mould Zombies if they were Oberium residents? But the magician quickly answered Ark's question.

-That's different. The undead in this region emerged afterwards from the impact of the curse.

Anyway, the magician in this place encountered the curse magic but he didn't become a dead person like the other residents. Was it stopped because the Mana Hall absorbed some of the mana? Or maybe it was because he was in the mine? The curse magic which affected the magician was incomplete. However, the form which resulted was more horrifying than the full curse. He was neither dead nor alive.....the magician had to endure the pain of his decaying body while still living.

-Even suicide didn't stop the Dark Lord's curse magic. Thanks to my rotting body, I started searching for ways to defeat the curse magic. Finally I came up with a way to use the power of the Mana Hall within the Hearthstone.

The Hearthstone found in the Mana Hall! The Mana Hall managed to somewhat stop the curse because it absorbed some of the mana, so couldn't the power of the Hearthstone be used to absorb some the curse encroaching on his body? But unlike his expectations, the magic of the Hearthstone was unable to be controlled after it collided with the curse magic and in the end the magician was turned into a Lich. Therefore Karad became immune to the power of the Mana Hall because he absorbed the same type of magic from the Hearthstone.

-Now I can finally be liberated from my pain.

The magician said and then pointed somewhere. Suddenly a cloudy light slowly engulfed the magician's body. The magician spoke it a voice filled with deep emotion as his body gradually faded.

-My time has already passed. Thank you God for this.

The magician said before he completely disappeared. Unlike the residents of Oberium, the reason, the magician's demonic magic wasn't that strong. It was weak because the curse magic had collided with the Hearthstone. So unlike the residents of Oberium, the magician entered heaven not long after the demonic magic was extracted. Since the magician's demonic aura was weakened, the japtem which it was sealed into didn't change as much as the items in Oberium. But there was still a reward for releasing the magician separately. After the magician disappeared, he received a lot of experience.

-You have received 30% additional experience for using Demonic Seal. -Your level has risen. -Your level has risen. -Your level has risen.....

Whenever Demonic Seal was successfully used, he would receive an extra 30% experience. Thanks to that, Ark gained 7 levels in one breath.

'Is this okay?'

Ark laughed as he went to the corpse of Karad.

Mantle with Strange Power (Rare)

Armour type: Mantle

Durability: 25/60

Defense: 25

Weight: 20

User restriction: Level 250 and more

A high-class mantle used by high ranking magicians of Oberium. This cloak is made from the fur of the legendary Rakurisa and has the effect of boosting the wearer's mental power and vitality.

However, this cloak has also absorbed the strange power of the Lich and has an added special effect of recovering vitality. Karad was unable to receive the Hearthstone's endless ability to absorb mana, it was able to obtain its immortal ability from this cloak.

In New World, there were rare stones which could absorb the magic around it and these were the Hearthstones. The nature of the stone would change depending on where it is buried. This stone had absorbed the Mana Hall's ability to drain mana. When it encountered the power of the curse magic, the reaction was explosive and the Hearthstone lost its strength and became a common stone.

"Ohh, a rare mantle!"

Ark's eyes shone. But when he read the information window, the item wasn't that great. Although it gave 200 extra mana and health, the special option was a little too low. Consuming 2000 mana just to restore 1000 health? It was possible for Karad who had infinite mana but how could he use it?

"The Hearthstone is also regretful."

Ark looked regretfully at the 'Hearthstone which lost its power.' The Hearthstone had the same ability to absorb mana as the Mana Hall. Thanks to the Hearthstone, Karad had gained the ability of infinite mana. While the effect was shown in the monster, there was no guarantee that a user would get the same effect. While Karad had used the 'Mantle with Strange Power' for his enormous recovery ability, the effect on the item dropped lower. But even if the performance hadn't dropped, the ability to absorb mana was extremely rare. While New World had mana recovery potions, those potions were ten times more expensive than health recovery potions. On the other hand, the amount required for his skills would increase when the skill levelled up so he would always lack mana. Any user would drool at the idea of a Hearthstone which absorbed mana.

"If my mana was able to replenish quickly then I can show the true power of this cloak....."

It was regretful.



“A magician who absorbed the power of the Mana Hall could create a Hearthstone. Even if the special effects of the Mana Hall stops at the mine, the power still remains. In other words, if the Hearthstone is buried again then wouldn’t it absorb the power of the Mana Hall?”

But when he worked as the vampire’s slave, he discovered that it took hundreds of years for the Hearthstone to absorb the magic around it. Even if it was buried again, it would only become a Hearthstone after hundreds of years. No one would bury a stone and expect to survive the hundreds of years it took to become a hearthstone.

“Well, it can’t be helped.”

Ark turned away from the body with dissatisfaction. Then something came to Ark’s head all of a sudden and he murmured.

“Wait? Is a few hundred years truly necessary?”

Time..... Ark had an item related to time. After defeating Karma, Ark had received the mysterious artifact Phantom Hourglass which allowed him to control time. It could be used to turn scrap iron into original items, but the number of uses was limited so it was too valuable to use in that manner.

‘Can’t I bury the Hearthstone and then use Time Acceleration on it?’

Wouldn’t that create a Hearthstone? In any case, Ark dug a hole and buried the Hearthstone. Then he raised the Phantom Hourglass over it and a message window appeared.

-You have used the Phantom Hourglass.

“Time Acceleration!”

Then the sand at the top started to fall at a tremendous speed. Once the sand finished falling down on the other side, another message window appeared.

-The special effects of the dungeon has disappeared.

‘The special effect is gone!’

The terrain had returned to normal so that meant the Hearthstone was properly absorbing the magic. Ark pulled out the Hearthstone with a face filled with expectation.

Mana Steal Stone (Unique Hearthstone)

This Hearthstone has absorbed the magic of the Mana Hall for hundreds of years. Although the power which maintains the balance of mana stretches over thousands of metres, it does not affect the outside. But in some rare cases, it influences the earth and the property of the earth will change. This Hearthstone has absorbed the power of the Mana Hall and gained similar properties. Of course, the Hearthstone can be used as a high level magic ingredient or it can be inserted into a socket item.

The Hearthstone gave him a 10% chance of absorbing mana when used in a socket item!

..... He had hit the jackpot.