

Ark Vol 17 C 6

Chapter 6

ACT 6 Dark Soul VS Beast Master

“That was fairly profitable.”

Ark smiled warmly at his bags. At first he thought it would be easily solved but the work had taken ten days. But this time he didn't think it was a waste of time. No, it was a highly profitable ten days. During the ten days it took to devour the wendigos and Soul Eater, his Spiritual Power had increased by 549! Currently Ark had 956 Spiritual Power. He never thought it would be a number that was possible. There was also the Blessing of Fire and Descent of the Fire Draconian skills after the quest completion. But was that all? He also carried the Fire Stone and rare Hearthstone he found in Dragonian. Since the wendigos were level 300~350, he didn't gain that much experience despite all the time hunting but he still managed to gain 9 levels. The results were more of a jackpot than he expected.

“Honestly, at first I thought I had made a mistake.”

When he first entered the chaos space and hunted the wendigos, he hadn't made that much profit. If he hadn't figured out Soul Extortion then he wouldn't have been able to survive the wendigos and the Soul Eater.

‘As expected, I can't throw away any skills. When I first received Soul Extortion, I thought it was just a skill I would seal up. Excavation was also like that but there is a way to make use of all of them. Besides.....’

While hunting the wendigos in the chaos space, he received half as much experience and items. It was to the extent that his bags were bursting with japtem.

‘Some rare ingredients were dropped by the Soul Eater but everything else are relatively cheap items. There are several magic items with the japtem so I should receive at least 100 gold for it. What should I do next after organizing all the japtem?’

He had finished all Fire Draconians' quests. He couldn't complete the Demon Magura quest because he needed more Knowledge of Ancient Relics.

“Once in town then I can gather more information about new quests and dungeons. I’ve come to Bristania after a long time so I should do everything possible.”

Ark decided on a plan for the future and descended Hwaryong Mountain. Then he found a small cave hidden on the bottom of the mountain. This cave was a safety zone that he found while looking for the Fire Draconians. No matter how many monsters wandered around New World, there were always hidden safety zones present. The place that Ark told Buksil to wait was this cave.

‘Ten days have passed so I wonder what Buksil has been doing?’

Once he was on the mountain than that person would have no motivation. Buksil who had lost Baekgu had been causing Ark quite a lot of stress. Ark entered the cave to look for Buksil. Then his foot caught on something and he fell down.

‘Huh? What is this?’

He looked down and saw an empty bottle of alcohol.

‘What the? This liquor bottle? That brat Buksil. Was he drinking while I wasn’t here?’

Ark made a disgusted face and kicked the empty bottle. It wasn’t just one. Empty bottles were scattered on the ground at the entrance of the cave while boxes of alcohol were also piled up. It was at least hundreds of bottles! The cave seemed like an alcohol warehouse.

‘This cheeky bastard. I told him to gather ingredients instead of just waiting around..... Yet now he’s having a drinking party? He lost his head completely after being depressed. Where on earth did he get this much alcohol.....’

Ark was grinding his teeth together when he suddenly realized something.

‘Wait? That guy. Where did he get the money to buy this much alcohol?’

Even if a merchant like Buksil entered a village to buy it, alcohol was quite expensive in New World. The cheapest bottle was at least 2~3 gold. In some cases, it wasn't rare for a bottle to go for 10 gold. Even hundreds of bottles of cheap alcohol would cost several hundred gold. Buksil only received a small allowance from Ark so he wouldn't have hundreds of gold. Then what was with these bottles?

'Don't tell me that bastard.....?'

"Ah no! There is no way! That Buksil bastard!"

Ark shrieked as he thought of the worst situation and dived into the cave. He quickly arrived at the campsite inside the cave.

'.....?'

An improbably scene was unfolding in front of his eyes.

"Kuah. Good! Hehehe!"

Buksil rubbed at the fat on his stomach and set the bottle down. It was good up to that point. Ark's eyes popped out at the other people present.

"Uwah, uwah, the alcohol is good, the alcohol is good!"

His eyes felt like it would fall out from looking around so much. On one side was a pair drinking alcohol and Baekgu who he thought had become dog soup in Bosaga. It was incomprehensible. But this was not the end.

"Hahaha, is it delicious? Delicious?"

"Wah, it is absolutely delicious. It is the first time I've tasted something so good."

“Oh, you understand the taste of alcohol. I really do like you!”

The huge figure who patted Baekgu’s back while holding the alcohol bottle was Bread.

“Hey, don’t do that. I don’t want dog hair to fly in this narrow area!”

The woman who threw the bottle at Bread was his partner Redian. People he never expected were gathered inside the cave and having a drinking party. Now all their eyes simultaneously concentrated on Ark when he ran in yelling.

“.....”

An awkward silence flowed within the cave for a short time.

‘W-What on earth is going on?’

Ark was the one who showed a response first. But Ark ignored Baekgu, Bread and Redian and just headed towards Buksil. Ark grabbed Buksil’s collar and shook him.

“You, you bastard. What is going on?”

“Ouch, what, what the?”

“The alcohol bottles! Did you buy then alcohol bottles with my money? Did you sell them? Did you sell them? Did you sell my japtem?”

Yes, that was the reason Ark rushed in. It wasn’t necessary to say again but Buksil was Ark’s personal cameraman. The japtem that Ark gathered was left in Buksil’s bag. Ark was worried that Buksil would’ve emptied out the bag while he was gone for a week. If Buksil disposed of all those items then wouldn’t he receive hundreds of gold? Normally he wouldn’t have thought of that. There was a contract where Buksil would receive a huge penalty if he disposed of Ark’s goods selfishly. But the supposedly dead

Baekgu was alive so he didn't know what Buksil would do from the shock. Ark couldn't see Baekgu, Bread or Redian anymore. Now the most important thing was money! He needed to know if Buksil had really embezzled his money.

"Japtem? Sell? Heh!"

Buksil looked at him stupidly and snorted. Then he removed Ark's hand and shrugged. Needless to say, it was possible to drink alcohol in New World. The person would return to normal after a bit, but they really were drunk while drinking. That was the state Buksil was in. Buksil had at least 10% alcohol in him judging by the smell and he shouted.

"You're always like that. Money, money, money! Do your eyes only see money?"

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

"Baekgu has returned alive and the first thing you talk about is money? It's always about earning money..... I'm tired of it! Damn! Yes, I sold a little bit of japtem and drank alcohol. Why? Can't I do that? Can't I drink a bit of alcohol after following you every day and being exploited? I sold all of it to buy alcohol. What will you do?"

'He sold my japtem for the sake of drinking alcohol?'

Ark looked at Buksil dumbly. Then a cold voice emerged from his mouth.

"..... Do you want to live?"

Buksil flinched and took a step back but it was only for a brief moment.

"Why are you staring at me like that? Damn, I'm also a person too! You think I'm afraid after hearing your words? I've been enduring it so far. But now I can't stand it. No, I won't put up with it. Then go ahead and kill me! Do it, do it!"

Buksil lost his mind after drinking alcohol. Ark also lost his mind after hearing that his japtem was changed to alcohol. Ark looked at Buksil with anger and laughed before moving.

“..... Kill.”

“Kill? Yes, kill me!”

“Wait a moment!”

Then Bread pulled the collar of the excited pig and moved forward. He looked at Ark and said.

“That’s not it. Is there a reason to react like that in this situation? Don’t you know? Shouldn’t you react to my presence first?”

“.....Let go of the pig.”

“No, no, I won’t. No, there seems to be some misunderstanding about where this alcohol comes from. I’m the one who bought it, not him.”

“What?”

Ark’s eyes started to return to normal. Then Bread scratched his head and sighed.

“Hah. He didn’t know what was going on but he calmed down after that guy explained. He seemed to want to talk to Ark. “That’s right, I bought the alcohol for everybody. This guy just drank the alcohol. By the way, don’t you seem to be quite hated? He only drank a little bit yet he keeps on cursing you.”

“Is it true?”

“What? That he cursed you?”

“No, that my japtem is safe.”

He already knew that Buksil was full of complaints. Naturally the talk about his japtem would be more important for him.

“Why would I lie about it? Do you want to see the receipts?”

Ark gave a huge sigh of relief. After that, he finally realized that the people in front of him were Bread and Redian.

“By the way, why are you guys here?”

“You finally asked.”

“This bastard, what do you want? Are you now holding hostages?”

“Hostages?”

“Aren’t they hostages? Then why are you here with Buksil?”

Then Buksil shouted angrily from behind Bread.

“Hey, don’t mess with him. Bread is the one who brought Baekgu back!”

“What?”

“Let’s clear up the situation. Please sit down. I’ll explain.”

Bread put the liquor bottle away and indicated a seat. Ark looked at Bread and hesitated. He hadn't noticed it because of Buksil but the situation was quite serious. Bread and Redian were his enemies. And it would be difficult for Ark to avoid both their attacks in this narrow cave. He couldn't guarantee his odds even in a 1-on-1 fight. It wasn't necessary to talk about 2 against 1. But it wasn't possible to run away. Even if he could get away, Bread already noticed the relationship between Ark and Buksil. If he didn't then he wouldn't be waiting for Ark in a place like this. The moment Ark tried to escape then Bread would use Buksil as a hostage.

'By the way, Bread's attitude seems a little different from before. He's not attacking recklessly like last time.'

When Ark didn't lower his guard to sit down, Bread explained the situation. The reason for this situation went all the way back to Bosaga village. When Ark had set the guards on Bread and Redian, they had planned to escape from Bosaga. They escaped the guards and hid around the outskirts of the village. They planned to track Ark when he left the village. But it was the bandit group that caught Bread's attention. The thieves who missed Ark had captured Baekgu and dragged him out of the village. And then they hung him upside down and tortured him to get Ark's next destination.

"Then I appeared."

Bread bragged. Even though there were 10 thieves, Bread and Redian were furious about the animal cruelty. After rescuing Baekgu, they decided to return the pitiful dog to his owner. It was only after they asked Baekgu that they discovered he was in Ark's party.

'Isn't that like jumping from the frying pan to the fire? This stupid dog!'

Ark shot a glare at Baekgu who was just eating in a corner. However, Baekgu had his own reasons for telling them Ark's destination. Baekgu didn't tell the thieves Ark's destination no matter how much he was tortured. He knew the goal of the thieves was Buksil. However, Bread's goal was Ark. As long as Buksil was okay, he honestly didn't care what happened to Ark. But the biggest reason he blabbed about Ark's destination was to get back to Buksil.

"Ugh, Ark..... I'm disappointed."

Baekgu also smelt of alcohol.

"I heard everything from Bread-nim."

'Why is he referring to Bread so formally while talking informally to me?'

The dog crept closer to the pig when he saw Ark frowning. Since the entire group was drunk, Baekgu's nerves had become stronger.

"What are you looking at? Didn't Bread-nim ask you for an honourable warrior's fight during your confrontation at sea? Aren't you the one who deceived him using various lies and ran away? Are these the actions of Hero Maban's descendant? Aren't you embarrassed? I'm disappointed, disappointed! Ah. The elder believed in you so much and even gave you the Three Marvel's fragment....."

"What? Embarrassed? Disappointed?"

Ark glared back. But Baekgu just snorted and took a gulp from the bottle. That's right. Baekgu had instantly blabbed about Ark's destination for this reason. Although he was branded a traitor, he still felt pride as a member of the honourable Wolrang clan. Furthermore, Bread was the one who saved him from the thieves. After Bread explained the reason why, Baekgu became indignant and guided Bread here for 'justice.'

"That's right. You made the mistake!"

Buksil shook an empty bottle and shouted. Ark's blood pressure instantly soared.

'These brats really.....!'

Buksil and Baekgu had waited with Bread for Ark. After one day, two days, three days..... They were bored waiting for Ark after such a long time so Bread decided on a drinking part and Baekgu and Buksil became drunk. Baekgu and Buksil then shouted in unison.

"Shameful! Coward! Accept a fair showdown!"

'This group is really annoying me.'

The pig and dog were causing a huge commotion. No, it was inevitable sooner or later. Right now the drunkards weren't the problem.

"Why is this happening? What did I do that made you pursue me like this?"

When Ark raised his voice angrily, Bread scratched his head and murmured.

"Well, that.... The reason is..... It doesn't matter right now. It is unrelated to why I'm here now. Since my competitive spirit has been fired up."

"Competitive spirit?"

"I can't give up now that we've come this far. Isn't that right?"

"That's just you! This is a nuisance to me!"

Bread waved his hand with a serious expression.

"I've been reflecting."

"Reflecting?"

"Yes, when I first met you I thought you were a cowardly guy who ran away. But I asked Baekgu. There was a situation then. You needed to create an Immortality Pill? I realized that I was wrong once I reflected. I just wanted to beat you to death without questioning the circumstances. Anyway, I will forget about the past after knowing the situation..... That's why I went to the guild and prepared this."

Bread took a scroll out of his bag and handed it to him.

-Warriors Challenge. Bread=Ark

High ranking members of the Warrior's guild can issue this challenge.

The duel will proceed immediately when the opponent who receives this agrees. When the duel starts, nobody except for the users concerned can participate. Unlike regular PVP battles, no penalties are applied. You will not become chaotic if the opponent is killed. If you die then you won't drop any items and will be revived on the spot. However the winner of the duel will take 500 fame from the loser.

"Now it doesn't matter if you win or lose."

Bread looked at Redian and confirmed it.

"Is this okay?"

"I don't know, I'm already tired of this."

"As expected, only you understand my feelings. I love you."

"Shut up you idiot."

Redian turned her head and nervously muttered while eating beef jerky. Bread grinned at her cute reaction and turned back to Ark.

"How about it? The conditions aren't bad right?"

“.....”

Bread's suggest was very unexpected. Over the past month, Ark had been plagued by the thieves and Bread. The thieves were taken care of for the moment. Only Bread and Redian remained. But Bread was suddenly asking for a 1-on-1 showdown. He even prepared a duel challenge so there was no need to worry about the death penalty.

'This isn't a bad offer. If I win then I can even receive 500 fame. Although I don't have any choice but to accept!'

If Ark rejected the challenge then his relationship with the pair would continue to be hostile. Then he would have to fight against Bread and Redian on the spot. In such a situation, the percentage of victory was 0%.

“Okay, I accept the challenge.”

“You made a good decision.”

“So give me some time to prepare for the duel. I need to rest and repair my equipment. You should also sober up in case it affects your capabilities.”

“.....You're not going to run away again?”

“You would just kill me if I run away from a formal challenge.”

“Oh, kill you? That would be a petty thing to do.”

“Let's stop talking.”

“I understand. Then let's start in 30 minutes.”

Bread withdrew and started to inspect his bayonet and equipment. Ark also sat in a corner opposite Bread.

‘I inevitably accepted the challenge but.....’

Ark was connected in his own way to PVP. Bread had considerably misunderstood a part of Ark’s character. Ark had avoided fighting Bread so far because of two reasons. One reason was Redian and the other reason was the situation was also cursed whenever he encountered them. He had no choice but to run away but Ark’s original character wasn’t the type to avoid a fight. There was no reason to avoid a 1-on-1 fight without any penalties. No, Bread was clearly a quite difficult person. Now he didn’t need to worry about the death penalty. But he hadn’t accepted the challenge without thinking.

‘.....If I fight then I have to win!’

Although there was no death penalty, he would still lose 500 fame if he lost. Losing 500 fame wasn’t a small penalty.

‘But the prospect of success isn’t that high if I think about it. Bread was level 410 when he last checked. Wouldn’t it have obviously become higher? I have the dark attribute bonus but Bread can use Beast Spirit Possession to raise his stats.’

Ark had considered Bread a few times. In particular, Ark was interested in Bread’s special skill Beast Spirit Possession. In fact, Ark had thought Beast Spirit Possession was better than his dark attribute bonus at first. But he later confirmed that it wasn’t a problem. His dark attribute bonus raised all stats by 50% which included useful ones like strength, wisdom or even luck. But Beast Spirit Possession was a skill which selected the stat to be raised. Moreover, the animal spirits could only be stacked 3 times. If he stacked the Beast Spirit Possession then he could raise his abilities by 150%. Furthermore, the animal spirits of Beast Spirit Possession had different characteristics so it was possible to switch characteristics whenever he wanted. The movement of a dolphin was possible with Beast Spirit Possession or even it can even cause a disease like ‘rabies’ with the dog Beast Spirit Possession.

‘But there is no substitute for my dark attribute bonus. I am level 383. Bread is 41 levels higher than me so there is still level difference. When considering Bread’s capabilities, the ratio of victory is 4:6.....’

That was his conclusion when thinking positively. Therefore some preparations were required to win. Ark busily moved his hands as he started the preparations. In this situation, Ark's most reliable skill was Survival Cooking! Ark made various dishes at extravagant speed and ate them.

Secondary Effects Information Window * Food effects

Tuntun Roast – Strong Chicken Breast Salad- Herb Soup- Fried Shrimps -Lightly Grilled Poco Leg- Slime Marinated Meat- Ratosu Steak- Monkfish Mushroom Soup

Total stats raised by the food effects: Strength +65, Stamina +36, Agility +40, Intelligence +15

* Effects of Tonic currently taking

Sipijeondaebotang (Strength +2, Stamina +2) Time taken: 16 days

'Amazing.'

Ark looked warmly at the information window. In the old days, he couldn't eat that many dishes because of the limit. Now thanks to the Monkfish Mushroom Soup, he could eat up to eight dishes before his satiety was full. Therefore his stats increased by 156! That was like gaining 15 levels.

'Huhuhu, how is it? The level difference has narrowed even more!'

Ark elatedly looked to the other side where Bread was preparing. Then his complexion instantly turned gloomy. Bread was also buffing up in preparation for the battle. The Beast Master was a Druid profession so it had a lot of buffs. But Ark turned gloomy because of Redian. Redian was a magician and it was the profession with the strongest buffs after the priest.

"Sheesh, how annoying.'Blade Force', 'Immortal Armour', 'Elemental Defense.' Eh..... What else is there?"

Blade Force increased damage. Immortal Armour increased durability and defense of equipment. Elemental Defense increased resistance to magic of various attributes. Etc..... Redian meticulously buffed Bread like a wife preparing his husband's clothes before he went to work. The preparations for battle were similar.

'What the? Then isn't it a standstill even after I ate the food?'

However Ark still had a secret weapon left.

'I definitely have to use this!'

He finally took the Promised Sword out of his bag. The Promised Sword had higher level restrictions than Gwisal's sword but the stats and options were worse. But the Promised Sword was an item with 4 sockets! If he inserted Hearthstones in the sockets then the sword would become much stronger than Gwisal's sword. Currently Ark had three rare Hearthstones which had a strong effort.

'Damn, I wanted to wait until I found four rare Hearthstones before using this..... It can't be helped. It will still be stronger than Gwisal's sword with three Hearthstones inserted.

Ark took out the three rare Hearthstones which flashed. It was the blood red jewel he received from vampire territory, the 'Vampire Stone.' The blue sheen came from the Mana Steal Stone. And finally there was the Explosion Stone which seemed like a fire was burning in it.

'Then shall I begin?'

Ark inserted the stones with a sense of expectation. First the sword trembled violently and turned cold when he added the Vampire Stone. Then a red line was drawn in the centre of the blade. Next he inserted the Mana Steal Stone which caused a blue light to spread. Finally the sword was wrapped in flames when the Explosion Stone was added and the information window appeared.

-Promised Sword (Rare)

Weapon: Two-handed sword

Attack: 40~50 Durability: 200/200

Weight: User restriction: Level 250, Advanced Sword Mastery skill

An ancient sword inscribed with complex magic symbols. The symbols engraved on the sword can't be decrypted using the current knowledge. However, the aura it gives off indicates that there is still an undisclosed hidden secret. There is also a space to fit something between the sword blade and hilt. It seems related to the sword's secret.

-Socket 1: (Vampire Stone) 5% of the damage dealt to an opponent is absorbed as health.

-Socket 2: (Mana Steal Stone) 5% of the damage dealt to an opponent is absorbed as mana.

-Socket 3: (Explosion Stone) There is a 33% chance of dealing 10~100 fire damage and 5~50 splash damage in a 2 metre area.

-Socket 4: (Empty)

All the trouble was worth it after seeing the information window about the set of rare Hearthstones. The real sword damage was unchanged but he could absorb his opponent's health and mana every time he attacked. There was also additional splash fire damage! A truly cheat-like option! It was completely different from the appearance of Gwisal's sword. This sword was embellished with red and blue and it had flames wrapped around it. Now even the visual of the Promised Sword was satisfying.

'With these options how much would I get for it in the auction?'

It would probably be worth two times the highest price he received so far.

‘That’s it, this is the best thing I can do for now! The only thing left is to use Blade Maintenance to raise attack and Laundry to raise defense.....’

Thus Ark finished his preparations for the fight. Suddenly Buksil and Baekgu came up to him.

“I..... Ark-nim.”

They had recovered from the alcohol they had drunk in New World. If players didn’t drink then they would return to normal after 1 hour. While Buksil looked sober, Baekgu still seemed slightly drunk. Buksil shrunk back and tried to make excuses.

“T-that is..... Before you go.....”

“It’s okay.”

Ark smiled and gave him a pat on the shoulder.

“I realized it this time. You’re always full of complaints. It’s all my fault. I’ve realized it.”

“Huh? T-then....”

Buksil and Baekgu’s face brightened. Then they froze at Ark’s next words.

“Your complaints are evidence that you need some discipline.”

Ark whispered sweetly into both their ears.

“.....You are dead.”