

Ark Vol 18 C 1

Chapter 1

ACT 1 Return of the King

“Phew.”

A heavy sigh flowed out. His expression sank even more as he looked at the residents gathered in the town hall. Galen the mayor of Lancel village, the Meow and Wolrang representatives as well as the thieves who were the representatives of the Samcheong College of Education were gathered. The group of people were why Shambala was sighing. An unidentified bandit group was scheming to loot Lancel! He grasped that the bandit group had 300 people and that the numbers would increase even more. After Galen heard the shocking information, he summoned the representatives of each species for a meeting. And the meetings to prepare a counterattack continuously repeated. Since they were unable to come up with an answer over the last two days, a tired sigh would naturally emerge.

“Why is this happening.....? The number of residents had increased and the village was finally becoming stable.....if we’re attacked then Lancel village will become like it was before..... Ah, why do these things always happen to Lancel village.....?”

Galen murmured with a pained expression. Then Shambala replied in impatient voice.

“Are you going to complain or resolve the problem? This is not the time for that. Like I said, this isn’t long left.”

“I know that. I understand.....”

Galen sighed again with his haggard complexion.

“It’s really frustrating! How can we solve this problem?”

Then someone struck the table and shouted. With a flowing, silver ma, the big figure was the elder of the Wolrang clan.

“What’s the point of this meeting in the first place? We know the enemy will strike. In addition, they’ve also killed many of our species! Then isn’t there only one answer? Fight! Fight them to the death!”

“That’s right!”

“There is no need to wait for those guys!”

“Instead, we should go out and show them an example!”

The Wolrang clan members showed off their fangs and growled. Until recently, the Wolrang had been slaves in the vampire territory. After travelling to Lancel from the vampire territory, their wild instincts had awakened while travelling the continent. Therefore the Wolrang had awakened their instincts as warriors. When the Wolrang expressed their savagery, the atmosphere instantly became serious.

“No, that is.....”

Galen stuttered with an unbearable expression.

“Bah, these dogs never change.”

The Meow elder Hassan who was sitting on the other side of the table snorted with her nose in the air. The eyes of the excited Wolrang simultaneously focused on Hassan.

“What you do mean by that you hairy balloon?”

“Didn’t you hear me? As expected from dogs, never listening to other people speak.”

“What? Dogs?”

“Haven’t you been listening? There are at least 300 of them. Furthermore, aren’t they all foreigners equipped with considerable skills? If we haphazardly attack without a plan than there is no telling what will happen.”

“Those cats.....do you want to try us?”

“Try you? It wouldn’t be bad.”

Hassan laughed and showed her claws. The Meow and Wolrang in the room growled at each other after being provoked. Then the raccoon clan representative cautiously said towards the two clan elders.

“My opinion is a little different. There is no way to stop the enemies with Lancel’s current power. Then shouldn’t all the residents take shelter and wait for those guys to pass? If they stay too long than the soldiers of Jackson will get involved and those guys will be forced to leave Lancel. If we protect the residents then we can reconstruct the town.”

“What?”

The two elders shouted simultaneously.

“Are you running away because you’re a little afraid? Do you expect the Wolrang to take such dishonourable actions?”

“Bah, what a typical idea from the raccoons who only dig tunnels! They’re no different from the dogs!”

Thus another shouted match began. Both the Wolrang elder and the raccoon representative hit the table with an unpleasant expression.

“Tunnel? What do you mean? Aren’t you the ones who created the overpasses? We’re the ones who struck the nails in most of the buildings in this village! Do you think we want to leave it?”

‘Damn, it’s starting again.’

Shambala shook his head with a disgusted expression. There were a number of reasons for the unsuccessful meetings but this was the biggest problem. Lancel village was split into four different types of inhabitants. The ex-thieves, the Meow, the Wolrang and the raccoons. And the species that had the most right to speak were the natural warriors the Meow and Wolrang clan. But these two were literally cat and dog and didn't get along. Since their living areas were separated and any big problems were arbitrated by Galen, this problem hadn't really occurred before. Now if the Wolrang gave any advice than Hassan would just laugh, while the Wolrang would ignore Hassan if she tried to speak. Even the raccoon clan would sometimes interject their feelings, so the fighting meant the meetings couldn't proceed properly.

'Besides, there is also an issue with the mayor.'

Shambala clicked his tongue and looked at Galen. Galen was no doubt a good mayor. That was obvious since he was able to manage the Meow, Wolrang, thieves, racoons and the Baran clan in one village without any major problems. But unfortunately Galen had no ability as a field commander. No aside from his talent as a field commander, he couldn't even handle it when the beast clans started arguing like this. And Shambala also didn't have any talent as a field commander.

'It really is crazy. Isn't this a problem that occurs when different species are gathered together? But it will be impossible to defeat those guys just by listening to this.....'

Shambala surveyed the meeting room and sighed again. If it was a battle than Shambala had confidence in himself. But leading a meeting and commanding troops wasn't in Shambala's nature. That was the reason why he entrusted the autonomous group in Seutandal to JusticeMan. In addition, this wasn't Seutandal. It was impossible for Shambala to command the Lancel NPCs.

"There's no need to think about it. Let's find their hideout and beat them to death!"

"You stupid dogs! They have a support army!"

"As expected, we should take refuge and avoid trouble!"

"Mayor, what do you think?"

The eyes of the people quarrelling focused on Galen.

“I, I.....”

Galen was stuttering when it occurred.

“Everything is rejected!”

The doors of the meeting room burst open and a rough voice could be heard. Every eye reflexively turned to focus on the door. Then they all started shouting.

“Ark!”

“Ark, you came. Thank you, thank you.”

Galen was moved to tears as he got up to greet his saviour. It wasn't just Galen. The ex-thieves and beast clan members also flocked towards Ark.

“Ark hyung-nim!”

“Ohhhh, it is Hero Maban's descendant!”

Ark panted as he ran out of breath and nodded.

“Pant pant pant, fortunately I'm not too late.”

“You're late enough you idiot.”

Shambala murmured in a curt voice.

“Have you just been wandering around since you were contacted?”

“Wandering around? Can you say that even after looking at my face? Ugh!”

Ark’s face was pale white and it seemed like he was going to vomit.....It was the side effect of traversing the continent in just two days. Once again, Ark had been drinking alcohol in a tavern in Paradon when Roco had contacted him. And Paradon was a city in the northern area of Bristania. Lancel was the exact opposite and it was located in the south of Schudenberg. Even if the Letter Movement allowed ease of travel around cities, it wasn’t omnipotent. There were restrictions in the distance that could be moved. In addition, the places where the Letter Movement tower had been placed were limited. Therefore Ark had to continuously use the Letter Movement and Radun to travel between cities before finally reaching Giran. It was constant riding and travelling! Thus the ramen that Ark ate in the morning felt like it was going to come back up.

‘But there is no time for me to vomit!’

Ark swallowed down the noddles that felt like it was coming up his throat.

“.....Did you swallow? Are you coming over?”

Shambala slowly withdrew while giving him a dirty look. However Ark didn’t care and just slowly entered the hall. Ark had shown up like a comet when Lancel was in a crisis! Galen, the thieves and the beast clans all looked at Ark with expectation. After everything that Ark did in the past, none of them looked at him with doubt. Ark who had all the expectations on him was about to finally start the formal meeting.

“Uha!”

Suddenly there was a strange sound by the door. The residents reflexively turned their heads and flinched. It was a huge figure holding a greatsword! But it wasn’t because of his physical form that the residents flinched. The man surveyed the group of beasts and was brought to tears.

“Dogs, cats and raccoons are gathered to hold a meeting..... A holy land! This place is a holy land!”

“W-what, what’s with this human?”

The beast clans murmured at the appearance of the strange human.

“Kyaaaaak!”

Then there was a scream from behind the man and a woman popped out. And her hand lodged in between Hassan’s stomach fat.

“What, what the? An attack?”

Hassan burst out with confusion as she fell down.

“Heok! Heheok! What are you.....! S-stop! It tickles!”

“T-this is false! So fluffy, I’ve never seen such a cute creature! Yes, it is cotton! Cotton? It is impossible for a doll to be this cute! Zipper, there must be a zipper hidden somewhere!”

The woman rolled around the wriggling Hassan and shouted. The residents looked at the two people who suddenly appeared with foolish eyes. Shambala was staring with foolish eyes as well and he asked Ark.

“What the, these guys?”

“They came to help.....”

“Help?”

“It is a long explanation.”

Ark sighed and scratched his head. Yes, the pair who appeared with Ark was Bread and Redian. The reason that Bread and Redian came to Lancel was because of Ark’s plan. They had been drinking together when Ark had been contacted by Roco about Lancel village.

‘Wait? Wouldn’t Roco only contact me if the situation is really serious?’

Naturally having people with a lot of power would be good. And Bread and Redian were known as the strongest pair in Bristania! Dragging those two along would certainly help. Of course, even with the misunderstanding those two wouldn’t traverse the continent to help Ark. But didn’t those two have a weakness? Ark came up with a crazy idea.

“Damn, I’m sorry but I have to go.”

“What the? Why? Weren’t we just beginning to drink?”

“A slightly serious problem as occurred in a village I know.”

“Village? A serious problem? What?”

“I don’t know yet. Just that some guys are trying to attack the village.”

“Attack the village? But why do you have to go to the village?”

“That village is a special place to me. Did you hear Baekgu’s words? After I rescued the Wolrang clan, they immigrated to a new village. The place I guided them to is the village being attacked. If the village is attacked and the Wolrang family exterminated than it is my responsibility.”

“The village where the Wolrang live?”

Bread suddenly ate the bait.

“The users are attacking the village where dogs live peacefully!”

Bread had a crazy dog mania! That’s why he rescued Baekgu from the thieves. Thus Ark let him know that the village where the dogs were gathered was in danger. The next sentence was bait for Bread.

“Those guys would definitely abuse the animals.”

“Damn.....! Where is it? Guide me there right away!”

As expected, Bread threw away his wine glass and jumped up.

“Wait a minute, you idiot!”

Then Redian spoke in an irritated voice.

“Where on earth are you planning to go? We already have some work to do. Now that we’ve settled things with Ark and the seal on the dungeon is released, shouldn’t we go back to capture the dungeon?”

“But the dogs. The dogs! If I don’t go than the dogs might die!”

“I don’t care, I already followed your actions earlier but no more!”

Redian frowned and turned her head. Then Bread started sweating. But Ark also prepared some bait for Redian.

“It’s not just the Wolrang. The Meow will also be sacrificed.....”

“Meow?”

“The cat clan. There are also a lot of Meow living in Lancel village.”

While Bread loved dogs, she was weak to cats. After coming to Paradon, he learnt that Bread and Redian loved dogs and cats. It was to the extent that they fought verbally over it. Of course Redian’s ears pricked as soon as he brought cats into the conversation. Ark put on a fake pained expression and deliberately murmured.

“Ahh, it is so dreadful to think that the Wolrang and Meow might be killed.....”

Before he could even finish, Redian threw away the chicken leg she was eating and jumped up. Then she said to Ark and Bread.

“What are you doing? Isn’t it urgent?”

Thus Ark was able to attract Bristania’s strongest pair to help him. Well, it was good until they went nuts after seeing the Wolrang and Meow at the town hall. Thanks to Bread and Redian sticking to the Wolrang and Meow, the meeting couldn’t progress. Ark sighed and muttered.

“Hey, you guys should go explore the village.”

Ark made one of the Wolrang and Meow their guides and drove them out of the meeting.

“Hmm hmm, then let’s start meeting again.”

Ark said while coughing awkwardly. The residents stared blankly at the two people who disappeared before concentrating again.

“Those two people.....well, it’s lucky that you came. First, let me tell you the situation in the village.....”

“That’s okay. I heard it while coming here.”

Ark waved his hand and interrupted Galen's words. Then he deliberately glared at the residents and said.

"What on earth have you been doing?"

"What? The meeting for a counter of course....."

"Meeting?"

Ark shook his head with outrage.

"It has been six days (game time) since Shambala brought the information to me. The remaining time left isn't that long. Yet the only thing you have done is have meetings?"

"It's because of that damn cat! She has to comment every time I give an opinion....."

The Wolrang elder stood up and pointed to Hassan. Then Hassan grabbed her beard and also shouted.

"I wouldn't comment if you didn't keep on talking nonsense!"

"Nonsense? Aren't the raccoons the one talking nonsense?"

"No, why are we being dragged into this?"

The raccoon representative jumped up and once again the meeting room became a mess. When the elders got into an argument again, several beast clan members frowned. This situation had repeated for two days. Galen just sighed as he lost all his willpower to break them up.

"Stop!"

The shout was like a bomb had exploded. The cry emerged from Ark's mouth and swept like a storm through the meeting room. When the stormy voice swept past, the excited elders instantly shut up. The effects of advanced Intimidation combined with charisma had overwhelmed the audience. In fact, normally he wouldn't use Intimidation on the residents of Lancel village. If he used Intimidation then he could lead the dialogue but if it failed then the intimacy would fall by 50%. Since it was his hometown, having his intimacy with the Lancel village decrease will be a significant loss. Yet he didn't have time to worry about the results of Intimidation.

‘.....What I was concerned about has happened.’

In fact, it had weighed on his mind the whole time. Just before Seutandal rose, Lancel had been connected to Haman fortress using the dimensional gate. At the time, most of the residents had helped Ark but some of them were users as well. And some of them had posted about the experience on the bulletin board. Of course, the Hermes alliance would notice and realize the existence of Lancel village.

‘Even if I only visit Lancel sometimes, it is possible to call it my hometown. I guessed that those guys would take some action.’

But he never imagined that they would attack the NPCs of the village like this. Of course, the Hermes alliance had targeted the NPCs in Seutandal. There was no reason for them not to aim at the NPCs in village.

But Seutandal was different from Lancel. If they occupied Seutandal with the Nakujuk then they would be recognized as the power there. However, Lancel was a part of the Schudenberg kingdom. Even if they plundered it, the village couldn't be occupied.

‘Lancel doesn't have a lot compared to other villages the same size. If their reason was looting than they wouldn't bother to target Lancel. As expected, their target was him. There's no doubt about it since Shambala said that their main goals are my store and the Magic Tower.’

The main point was why it was occurring now. Presently the Hermes alliance had suffered significant losses thanks to the destruction of the lawless port. Of course, when thinking about it than those guys wouldn't leave it alone. But he had expected retaliation against Seutandal not Lancel. So Ark had often checked the situation in Seutandal through JusticeMan. However they had unexpectedly aimed at Lancel.

‘Why are they attacking Lancel when the lawless port had just been destroyed.....?’

After such a large loss, what reason why they have to waste hundreds of guild members to attack Lancel? But Ark soon discovered the reason why.

‘The stolen goods brought from Seutandal!’

20% of the stolen goods from Seutandal had been brought to Ark’s store thanks to his tip. Of course, the Hermes alliance suffered a significant loss when the lawless port was destroyed but the confiscated goods were also a large part of their investment. The warehouse where the stolen goods were stored in the lawless port was leased to other pirates. In addition to leasing the warehouses, they were also responsible for disposing of the stolen good.

‘If they confiscate the stolen goods then it will become the property of the Hermes alliance! If they have the stolen goods then they can recover from the loss of the lawless port.’

That was Raiden’s thought. But in this situation, they couldn’t attack Seutandal to take back the stolen goods. Then they somehow received information that 10,000 gold worth of goods was being carried to Lancel?

‘That is enough reason to attack Lancel despite the various risks.’

And if they really succeeded in attacking Lancel.....

Not only would they steal the goods worth 10,000 gold, they would also plunder the stock kept for Ark’s store! But there was even more. Ark had a significant investment in the real estate of Lancel. He was 100% convinced that he would make a profit so he hadn’t regretted the investment. Whenever Ark received some profit from his store, he would invest it back into the village. Therefore he currently had a 4% stake in the village. Ark’s investment strategy of investing 200 gold for every 0.1% share had increased to 250 gold. It had grown 25% within a few months. In other words, Ark’s current real estate worth was 10,000 gold!

‘Of course, there is no way to govern Lancel even if I have a stake in the real estate. But if those guys attack they won’t just take some goods. If the village suffers serious damage.....’

The real estate market would fall to the bottom! It would be an astronomical loss! Ark would suffer tremendous losses the moment Lancel was plundered. Ark's dream of a trade route through Ark's store, the real estate price jump, the lawless port commission etc. would be ruined. No, those thousands of gold could have a huge impact on people's lives. But such an important battle was being affected by the emotional quarrels of these people! There was no time to consider his degree of intimacy with the NPCs.

'I have to defend the village!'

"It is really pathetic!"

Ark glared at the beast clans and shouted roughly. Currently Ark was at a crossroads of whether he would live or die. That explosive sentiment caused Intimidation to have enormous strength. Like a bomb exploding in the meeting room, the beast clans shrunk and hung their tails between their legs with fear.

"Isn't this a meeting to determine a plan? Fighting among the Wolrang and Meow, as well as the raccoons' suggestion to flee is not helpful!"

Ark spoke using Intimidation and glared around the meeting room.

"B-but....."

"Of course, there is some truth in the raccoon's opinion."

Ark restrained Galen from voicing an objection. Shambala confirmed that it was Jewel's group in the cave. All the users belonged to the Hermes alliance. There were 300 users between level 250~300!

As a village in the mountains, Lancel had quite a few combat troops. The ex-thieves, Wolrang and Meow were 300 people, and when added with the raccoon were 500 people. However, the former thieves were people who switched jobs after graduating from the Samcheong College of Education. In fact, there were only 100 members of the guard that could be utilized in actual battle. Despite being level 200, the thieves only had an actual combat ability of around level 150 since that was when they switched jobs. Although they had some special abilities, the Meow and raccoons were the same. Only the Wolrang were level 300.

'In the end, the numbers that could be considered battle worthy are around 300 people. When comparing Jewel's group and Lancel, the combat power is almost equal!'

The problem was that Duke would soon join the party.

'Those guys have already collected information about Lancel village and worked out a strategy. And since they withdrew from the guild, the Hermes alliance won't be risked by the mission. It was natural for thing to invest everything into winning. Thus the support forces wouldn't be dozens but hundreds of people. In the end, those guys would have about 500~600 people!'

Even if their numbers were less, their levels were higher which would even it up. However, they also had more people. If they attacked then there was a 100 in 100 chance of Lancel village losing. That's why there was some merit to the raccoon's plan of escaping. If they didn't have a chance than they should escape the crisis and seek assistance from Lord Jackson. As a species full of artisans, it was natural for them to give that opinion. In fact, after Shambala brought the information Galen had sent a message to Jackson stating that Lancel would be attacked. But Lancel was a free village so it was difficult to send soldiers to help just for a possibility. Of course, Ark had 120% with Lord Jackson so he could convince the Lord to move but there was already no time. Anyway, if there was a surprise attack than Jackson would have no choice but to move. Once the soldiers moved than Jewel's group would have no choice but to leave Lancel. Ark summarized the raccoon's idea and Galen sighed before nodding.

"That does seem to be the only way to protect Lancel."

".....Do you really think it is possible to protect Lancel like that?"

Ark declared sharply.

"Lord Jackson can't protect Lancel village forever. One day the soldiers would have to return to Jackson. But those guys who have plundered the village will never give up on Lancel. They will keep on vigilantly watch Lancel in order to wait for a chance. Isn't it likely that they would return to the village?"

In order words, if the village was captured by those guys once than it would be the end. Now there was only one day remaining. There was no chance to move the goods from Ark's store to another place. Even if he could protect his store's assets, there was nothing he could do about the real estate. If the village

was occupied than 10,000 gold worth of real estate would be taken away. Yes, Ark had no choice in the first place.

“The only thing we can do is unite and fight against those guys!”

“.....!”

The meeting room was as quiet as a mouse after Ark’s words. It wasn’t because of the contents of the speech. It was the dreadful force emitted from Ark’s eyes. It was natural. Thousands of gold hung on the battle! No, it was a battle where lives were at stake!

“.....Do we have a chance?”

Galen swallowed his saliva and asked Ark. The ex-thieves and beast clans also looked at Ark tensely. Ark knew what they wanted him to say. He closed his eyes and allowed the residents’ tension to rise before smiling and answering in a firm voice.

“Of course!”

“That’s it! The answer we waited for!”

The Wolrang elder suddenly slammed his fist on the table and shouted. Hassan also burst out laughing.

“Hohoho. As expected from Hero Maban’s descendant!”

“If Ark-nim says so than we can’t object!”

“We will follow Hyung-nim!”

The raccoons and ex-thieves also spoke firmly. Yes, there was a reason they had been arguing during the meetings for the last two days. It was because there was no one to say in a voice of conviction ‘we have

to do this.’ But Ark who they had a 120% degree of intimacy with had shown up and said ‘it is possible to fight and win.’ When he spoke, the opinions of the Lancel residents instantly changed to his view. Galen also looked relieved that Ark had taken the burden off his hands.

“You are indeed the only person I can believe in. Then I’ll leave the commanding to you. Please protect Lancel village.”

There was a ringing sound and the quest information window popped up.

-Find New Settlers!

+ Sub Quest: War to Defend Lancel Village.

Thanks to your efforts, Lancel village has been developing. But some outlaws have obtained information about Lancel village and decided to attack it. If Lancel village is occupied by the outlaws then it will be difficult to predict the damage. The residents of the village will lose their homes and the reputation will fall so few people will visit the village. The only way to avoid this is to stop the outlaws.

The interim mayor Galen has entrusted the rights of the defensive war to you and you have the ability to command the residents. Minimize the damage on behalf of Galen and stop this situation (If you fail this quest then the quest will also be failed).

‘Damn!’

Ark frowned as he read the information window. In fact, his had been finished when the Wolrang arrived in Lancel village. The quest had ended after 1 year and a half. However he hadn’t felt it was necessary to receive the compensation straight away so he had delayed and went to Bristania. But now the quest which took 1 and a half years to complete might fail if he couldn’t protect Lancel.....

‘Although it is natural.’

What good would new settlers be if Lancel village was destroyed? Anyway, even without the quest Ark would be screwed if Lancel was occupied.

‘Okay, it just has to turn out well. If hit by a bullet I’ll die and I’ll also die if hit by a missile. There is no room for me to withdraw.’

“Don’t worry. I will do everything possible to defend Lancel village!”

Ark grabbed Galen’s hand and answered. Ark had returned. The true leader of Lancel village had been handed the baton!