

Ark Vol 18 C 6

Chapter 6

ACT 6 Game Exclusive News

“Dammit!”

Ha Myung-woo opened the door and entered the office violently.

“How are you managing the candidates?”

Ha Myung-woo shouted and threw the document onto the desk. The reason was the video of Lancel village broadcasted yesterday morning. No, the video itself wasn't a problem. The important thing was that the main character Ark was one of Global Exos candidates. It was a problem because he was one of the special management targets. Once again, the reason for the examination was for the Planning Department of Global Exos to find the master code. However, so far the Planning Department had no idea of where the master code could be found.

‘According to the information, the master code should be closely related to the scenario of New World.’

New World was a game with infinite degrees of freedom. But even certain scenarios existed in New World. And the scenarios proceeded according to the users' growth. If the users grew quickly then the scenario would progress quickly and if growth was slow then the scenario would also slow down.

‘By hiding the master code in the scenarios, Park Woo-seong left a challenge for gamers. The master code is unable to be found using luck and chance. Park Woo-seong made it clear that the master code could only be found after several checkpoints are passed.’

As the main designer of the game, Park Woo-seong had designed those checkpoints to be within the scenarios. Therefore over the last 2 years the Planning Department had been reviewing reports and videos from the candidates and looking at their quests and how it might relate to future scenarios. And it was very important to manage this information. The master code being hidden in New World meant that users could get their hands on it. If information about the master code flowed into the hands of a user who wasn't a candidate then Global Exos would be in an unbearable situation.

“The master code is a program which controls everything in New World. If the person with the master code wanted then they could delete thousands of users’ information at once or they could deliberately cause system errors which would paralyze the whole game.”

That was what one of the game developers said. If such a thing happened then Global Exos would be damaged by several billion won. But that was only a part of what the master code could do. There was an even worst situation.

“The New World system connects directly to the brain. If there is a serious bug which affects the system then that bug could impact the users’ brain. In the worst case scenario, the user would suffer serious brain damage.”

Yes, that was the situation they were most concerned about. Such dangers always existed since virtual reality connected to the brain. Therefore all virtual reality games had safety equipment which double and triple checked safety New World was the same. The problem was that the master code could even control the safety equipment. If a person with the master code unlocked the safety device and restarted the system then hundreds of terabyte information would flood into the users’ brains. It was a tremendous amount of information beyond the limits of the brain! Users who received such a bomb of information might become brain dead. Then what would happen if a user who didn’t know about the master code obtained it? In the worst case scenario, they would have to discontinue New World and lose the billions invested in it. Yes, obtaining the master code was like a life or death situation for Global Exos.

‘Even if we have to use hundreds or thousands of personnel, we have to find it!’

But keeping this information secret was just as important. If any of the other rival companies knew about the master code then the situation would get out of hand. The second problem was if a rival company obtained the master code. If the competitors knew the truth about the master code and the risks to users, Global Exos would receive a lot of criticism for commercializing New World anyway. Therefore it was more important to hide the information that they were looking for the master code. So the staff decided to use the candidates.

‘We can freely obtain information about the game through the candidates.’

Ha Myung-woo also often turned on the broadcast at night to monitor news. Fortunately, the war between users in the mountain village would cause no big problems. But if any information about the

master code had been in that video then it would've been a huge problem. As the manager, he couldn't just let it pass!

'Of all things, a video of one of the special management targets.....!'

"Where is Ho Myung-hwan? Bring him here right now!"

Ha Myung-woo shouted angrily. At the same time, Ho Myung-hwan ran into the Planning Department and shouted.

"T-Team Chief-nim, it is huge!"

"Huge? What could be bigger than this problem?"

"Huh? That's.....no, please look at this data. The Public Relations Department called this morning and showed me this. It is truly a jackpot!"

Ho Myung-hwan explained in an excited voice.

"What the, this is?"

When he woke up in the morning, he had become a big star. He never imagined that it would become like this. After arriving in Lancel and participating in the defensive war, Hyun-woo had felt a huge sense of burden. This war was different from other situations. Depending on the outcome, two years of hard work and sweat could fly away. The stolen goods, the real estate invested in Lancel village and the goods from Ark's store. The estimated amount was tens of thousands of gold. Tens of thousands of gold..... When converted to money it was a huge price which reached hundreds of millions of won! It was an extravagant amount that people would kill over. Such a huge amount could fly away in one moment from the war. Therefore Hyun-woo couldn't get any rest during the last two days. He wasn't able to sleep. Although it was inside the game, Hyun-woo also had his life at stake.

'If I was defeated then I would really die of a heart attack.....'

But luckily the war ended with Hyun-woo's victory. He had risked his life and protected his assets. All the tension within Hyun-woo had been cut and he had fallen asleep and only just woke up. Then he logged into the computer without really thinking about it and his mouth opened absentmindedly.

-I really was thrilled!

-He was silent for a while after Seutandal rose but this really was a tremendous job.

-As expected from Dark Wolf. Dark Wolf really is the hero of New World!

-Dark Wolf, Dark Wolf, Dark Wolf!

Hyun-woo had logged into the auction site to examine the market prices. New world's homepage. The various bulletin board and information sites were all talking about Dark Wolf. That wasn't all. While it was rare for a non-celebrity to reach the top 10 in search rankings on portal sites, the Dark Wolf fan club had reached 3~4 in the search rankings. It reached the extent that there were even fan clubs from foreign countries.

'What's going on?'

Hyun-woo looked at the monitor filled with the name Dark Wolf with a stupid expression. Of course Hyun-woo had expected quite a bit of interest after broadcasting the Lancel defensive war. He hadn't really been thinking about that when negotiating with the station. However, the actual reaction was a dozen times more than Hyun-woo expected. Hyun-woo looked at the monitor with a frozen expression. Hyun-woo was someone who stayed in all day playing the game. Then one day there was an explosion of interest in Hyun-woo, no in Dark Wolf from Korea and the world. He honestly didn't know how he felt about it.

Diririri.

The phone then rang while Hyun-woo was making a stupid expression.

“Hello?”

“Is this Dark Wolf-nim?”

“Huh? Yes, but why?”

“I am the game exclusive news reported you called the other day, Lee Yun-gyu.”

“Ah! Reporter-nim, why are you.....?”

Hyun-woo was still in a state of shock after just waking up so he spoke in a slurred tone. Then Lee Yun-gyu hesitated before explaining.

“That’s.....no, I can’t tell you over the phone. It involves a copyright problem with the video so can you come to the broadcasting station right away? Just tell the guards that you’re Dark Wolf.”

Since Lee Yun-gyu sounded a little weird, Hyun-woo hurried over there. When he arrived at the broadcasting station, a man quickly ran out.

“Ah, welcome. Are you Dark Wolf-nim? I’m Lee Yun-gyu.’

“Yes, hello?” But why do you need me this morning? What’s the matter?”

“Problem?” There is one. A very huge problem.”

“A huge problem?”

“I can’t talk about it here so please enter for the moment. The Team Chief is also waiting.”

Lee Yun-gyu guided Hyun-woo into the broadcasting station. When he arrived at the meeting room, a middle-aged man was waiting. He was the team chief in charge of the game exclusive news segment. Hyun-woo greeted the Team Chief and sat down. Once he sat down, the Team Chief laughed and said.

“Have you connected to the internet today?”

“Huh? Ah, yes.....”

“That is why we wanted to meet you today.”

“Because of that?”

When Hyun-woo tilted his head with confusion, both Lee Yun-gyu and the Team Chief laughed. Then their eyes landed on Hyun-woo and they paused before speaking.

“The results came in this morning. It is the audience ratings for the Lancel defensive war broadcasted yesterday. Do you know how much the audience rating was? 35%! Surprisingly it was 35%! When the broadcast started it was on 7% but the ratings had gone up to 35% before it finished!”

“.....So?”

Hyun-woo scratched his head and muttered. Of course, even Hyun-woo who never watched dramas knew that 35% viewership was a significant amount. But he wasn't a celebrity so audience ratings had no effect on him. And why were they suddenly talking about audience viewership?

“This is the best audience rating since the game exclusive news started. And it's the first time the ratings had jumped from 7% to 35%.”

“.....What is your point?”

Hyun-woo answered with an unimpressed voice. Then the Team Chief suddenly stood up and grasped Hyun-woo's hands.

“Let’s sign a contract!”

“Huh?”

“Now all the users in the country who play New World.....no, there is nobody in New World who doesn’t know about Dark Wolf. Our station’s website and telephone line was paralyzed from calls wondering who Dark Wolf is. The audience’s interest in you can’t even compare with that of a celebrity. If Dark Wolf-nim appears on the broadcast then it will be a huge jackpot!”

‘They brought me all the way to the broadcasting station just to say this?’

Hyun-woo sighed and shook his head.

“I’m thankful for the suggestion but I already said that I have no intention of appearing on the broadcast.”

He didn’t want his face to become well-known so he was unwilling to waste time with the broadcasting station. The station had contacted him many times but he had always refused. His answer was still the same, especially with the interest concentrated further on him. There was no reason for him to accept the offer. But the Team Chief also shook his head.

“No, the request isn’t for you to appear on the broadcast.”

“But you talked about a contract?”

“What I meant.....you explain it to him.”

“Yes, in the past I wanted Dark Wolf-nim to appear on the broadcast directly but I realized I had the wrong idea after looking at the broadcaster’s ratings.”

Lee Yun-gyu explained to Hyun-woo.

“The wrong idea?”

“It will be fine if Dark Wolf-nim appears as Dark Wolf.”

“What are you talking about?”

“In fact, our team had met up prior to this meeting. We were wondering why the video got such an absurd amount of interest. While there was already interest in the Lancel war thanks to the Crime File and Dark Wolf-nim battled well, we think the biggest role is Dark Wolf’s mystery as an unidentified warrior.”

“An unidentified warrior?”

“Yes, Dark Wolf-nim is a player who has only emerged four times. The Evil Silrion, the siege of Silvana, the Seutandal war and now this incident. The users have never seen Dark Wolf outside of those incidents.”

It was natural. He only transformed during those times. Lee Yun-gyu smiled and continued talking.

“In fact, the audience was also interested in the users with you. But their interest in those users weakened quickly. Whenever you appear, the interest is only focused on Dark Wolf-nim. That’s because they don’t know anything about Dark Wolf-nim. In addition, the users never know what to expect when you appear in a video.”

Yes, the psychology of the interest in Hyun-woo was similar to that of a masked wrestler. The broadcasting station came to the conclusion that this was the reason for the huge ratings. So if Hyun-woo appeared on the broadcast then it would actually pour cold water on the viewers’ interest.

“But it is hard to give up the overwhelming interest of the viewers. So the game exclusive news planning department has organized a segment once a week which will show Dark Wolf’s gameplay. Since your face won’t be directly shown and it will be possible to maintain the interest in Dark Wolf, wouldn’t there be no burden on you?”

Hyun-woo felt refreshed by Lee Yun-gyu's proposal. Certainly there was no reason for Hyun-woo to reject. The contract was no different from selling the 'Netherworld exploration of a wicked wolf' video. If Dark Wolf's identity was concealed and the audience ratings increased then there was no need to worry about personal information leaking. Furthermore, he didn't have to make a separate video. He was already sending all videos of his gameplay to Global Exos. The station only required a 10 minute video once a week so he just had to pick a decent video of Dark Wolf. It was a fixed income that would come in once a week. It was an unexpected chance!

'But.....'

There was one problem in selling the video. Hyun-woo already had a contract with Global Exos to send his videos to them. According to that agreement, Global Exos had the rights to all the videos Ark took. That right also extended to whether the video could be broadcasted on TV> He hadn't thought about that part when he had contacted the station about broadcasting the Lancel defensive war. It wasn't until this morning that he had worried about the contract. If Global Exos decided it was a breach of contract then it would be a serious problem.

'If I sign another contract then I'll be sued.'

Anyway, he couldn't blindly sign the station's contract.

"The offer is appreciated but I'll have to consult somewhere else before accepting."

Hyun-woo sighed and replied but Lee Yun-gyu just nodded and said.

"I'm aware of that. Is it because of Global Exos?"

"Huh? How do you know that?"

"In fact, we got a phone call this morning from the Planning Department of Global Exos. At first they called to protest about the video. That's why our contact with Dark Wolf-nim is so delayed."

‘Of course.....!’

Hyun-woo felt his heart fall.

If the Planning Department of Global Exos called than the problem might be more serious than Hyun-woo thought. However, the words which followed were completely unexpected.

“But then we received another call a little while ago. They said it didn’t matter if Dark Wolf’s video is broadcasted. They also sent someone to discuss the problem.....”

“Ark-nim!”

Then another man entered the meeting room and shouted. The person who called out was Ho Myung-hwan from Global Exos Planning Department.

“I tried to call your house but you were already heading to the broadcasting station.”

Ho Myung-hwan wiped off his sweat as he ran in and took a seat. And he spoke with a mock-dissatisfied look.

“By the way, what nonsense is this? Shouldn’t you have consulted with me before seeing the video to the broadcasting station? Do you know how much I got yelled at by the Team Chief?”

“That.....”

“Well, it’s fine. I’ll talk about that problem later.”

Ho Myung-hwan pulled out a few documents from his bag and said.

“I’m Ho Myung-hwan from Global Exos Planning Department. You already received a call about it in the morning but Global Exos owns the rights to Ark’s videos. But after a brief meeting, we decided it didn’t

matter. We've decided to think positively about the fact that Ark-nim's video was broadcasted on the game exclusive news."

Ho Myung-hwan scratched his neck and continued speaking. In fact, the game publisher didn't have a problem with the broadcasting station. If the game showed on the broadcast then the users' interest would concentrate and it would be followed by a rise in sales. Therefore the game publishers actually lobbied the staff of the broadcasting station. However, the situation was different when it came to New World which had millions of players. In addition, Hyun-woo's video was such a hit that it reached 35%! Therefore as Hyun-woo signed an exclusive contract with him, Ho Myung-hwan was like his manager.

"However, there is one condition. Global Exos will check the video first and then we'll send it to the station."

The Planning Department wanted to review Hyun-woo's videos first to check that there were no hints about the master code before sending it to the station. So they had no problem with the broadcasting station's contract. Lee Yun-gyu looked through the contract and nodded.

"Then the fee will be 1.5 million won for every 10 minute video?"

'Heok!' 1-1.5 million won?'

Ark felt his breath catch as he listened to the copyright fee proposed by the broadcasting station. Of course, he had received 2 million won for the 'Netherworld exploration of a wicked wolf.' But that was a two hour movie. It was also selected as the winner of a special competition so the price received was the prize. But this was 1.5 million won for a 10 minute video! Since it was broadcasted once a week, that was 6 million won in 1 month! He could receive an income of 6 million won without even moving a finger.

'T-this is a jackpot!'

Hyun-woo swallowed his saliva at the thought. Then Ho Myung-hwan muttered with a weird expression.

"1.5 million won..... That's less than I thought."

“Huh?”

“I know the broadcaster’s rating increased quite a bit. And the only thing the internet can talk about is the broadcast. Yet 1.5 million won for a 10 minute video when Ark-nim’s gameplay increased the rating so much is a bit low don’t you think?”

“1.5 million won isn’t a small amount for a game video.”

“That’s true but 1.5 million won is a bit.....”

“Wait a minute!”

At that moment Hyun-woo stood up and shouted.

“Wait a minute, I’m going to talk to this person and then come back in a bit.”

“But.....”

“It will only take a short time.”

Hyun-woo suddenly dragged Ho Myung-hwan out of the meeting room. After moving far away, he frowned and muttered.

“Why are you doing this?”

“Huh? Why?”

“1.5 million won is being given for one game video. Don’t I just have to edit and transfer the video? Yet why do you seem to be interfering? What is the problem with the game video that you said you would talk about later? Is this the Team Chief’s way of getting revenge on me? I made a mistake but.....”

Hyun-woo cried out as he placed a hand on Ho Myung-hwan's shoulder who muttered in a low voice.

"..... This is a problem."

He couldn't understand. Ark would be really upset if the contract failed because Ho Myung-hwan interfered. It was 6 million yen in one month. That was plenty of reason for him to be upset if the contract failed. When Hyun-woo glared at him, Ho Myung-hwan spoke with an embarrassed expression.

"Well, there seems to be some kind of misunderstanding?"

"What? You're the one interfering!"

"Why am I interfering? It's because the figure was really below my expectations."

Ho Myung-hwan then explained the circumstances.

"After the video was shown, the Planning Department also received offers from other broadcasting stations. They wanted to know the phone number of the user who appeared in the video."

Yes, the game exclusive news wasn't the only game broadcast in South Korea. Since the broadcast attracted such attention from viewers, other broadcasting stations became interested in Dark Wolf.

"The highest amount proposed was 1.8 million won."

"1-1.8 million won.....!"

Ho Myung-hwan's mouth gaped open at Hyun-woo's words. Hyun-woo had honestly thought that 1.5 million won was an extravagant price for a 10 minute video. However, 1.8 million won? If he had joyfully accepted the 1.5 million won contract then wouldn't he have lost 300,000 won? It was unthinkable to Hyun-woo but other broadcasting stations were really that interested in the video?

'The situation has completely changed.'

Ark's eyes turned to gold.

'This is an opportunity!'

Hyun-woo's thoughts rolled through his head before he entered the meeting room again.

"How about 3 million won for one video?"

Lee Yun-gyu and the Team Chief's faces stiffened at Hyun-woo's words. Ho Myung-hwan's expression was even more amazed. Of course the audience rating for the video was 35%. And the interest in Dark Wolf had run out of control! If they continued broadcasting Dark Wolf-related videos then a considerable audience rating would be secured. But no matter what, it was still a game video. When broadcasting other users' videos, it was customary to only give them a few hundred thousand won. No, it was just fortunate that their videos were even being shown on TV. Yet now he wanted 3 million won for a 10 minute video not related to a celebrity? It was unprecedented for the game exclusive news which was a low budget program.

'But they'll have to accept.'

Hyun-woo looked at the dumb faces Lee Yun-gyu and the Team Chief were making and smiled. Hyun-woo had no interest in the circumstances of the broadcasting station. But thanks to his underprivileged childhood, he had the ability to sense money. He sensed that it would be possible to ask for more money after listening to Ho Myung-hwan talk about other broadcasting stations.

'I don't know much about broadcasting stations but I know they fight among each other to get the highest ratings. And the game exclusive news broadcasts at the same time as 2 other game broadcasts. They are probably the ones who contacted Ho Myung-hwan.'

That was the reason why Hyun-woo had courage to ask for more money. Since Lee Yun-gyu mentioned the ratings, they would do anything to secure Hyun-woo's guaranteed audience. Like he said, the viewer's interest would be concentrated on Hyun-woo whenever they saw a video.

'Yet they are trying to offer me a price 300,000 won lower than other broadcasting stations? If I had been hit in the back of the head with that then my heart really would be upset. Anyway, the situation has completely changed now that I know about the other broadcasting stations. The possibilities are endless. The person holding the sword hilt is me.'

The power of Hyun-woo's video would increase the rating of the game exclusive news. Then what would happen if that video shifted to another broadcasting station? Yes, Hyun-woo thought of all this after hearing Ho Myung-hwan's words. It was possible to decrease the ratings rather than increase them. The video could be used to increase the ratings of the broadcasting station. However, he could also use it to increase their ratings.

'Anyway, even if the deal isn't accepted then I can get 1.8 million won elsewhere.'

"3 million won.....that is....."

The Team Chief's and Lee Yun-gyu's resistance faded away at his next words.

"Then I'll just have to go to S broadcasting station."

"W-wait a minute!"

When Hyun-woo turned around without any regrets, the Team Chief instantly jumped up and stopped him. He hesitated for a while before sighing and mumbling.

".....2.5 million won. Any more than that will be a problem."

"I accept. Then the fee for the video this time will be 3 million won instead."

Hyun-woo smiled and drove in a wedge. Thus Hyun-woo managed to get a fee for the video copyright at 8 times the price. The price per video was 2.5 million won. Along with the 5 million won contract deposit money, he also received 3 million won for the Lancel defensive war video. So he left the broadcasting station with 8 million won. However, there was still one problem remaining for Hyun-woo. The issue

with the Global Exos breach of contract seemed to be resolved somehow. However, the rights of all Ark's videos belonged to Global Exos. If Hyun-woo wanted to broadcast the video on TV then he should also pay a certain amount of the fee to Global Exos.

'Do I have to give a part of the copyright fee to Global Exos?'

He had just received money and now it felt like he was being robbed. However, Ho Myung-hwan shook his head and said.

"The original agreement was that Global Exos would receive 30%. But Ha Myung-woo decided to discuss it with the team after seeing the results. Like I said when explaining the contract, the broadcasting station will have to receive our agreement first before they can post the video. If the contract is kept then all future copyright fees will be paid entirely to Ark-nim."

In other words, it had to go through prior censorship. But Hyun-woo didn't care as long as he earned money.

"Really? Thank you!"

"No, we should be thanking you instead."

"Huh?"

Ho Myung-hwan smiled at Hyun-woo's confusion.

"Didn't I tell you? I was yelled at by the Team Chief because of Ark-nim's video."

"Oh, I'm sorry. The circumstances....."

"It's okay. It's because Ark-nim showed the video that an unexpected thing occurred."

“What does that mean?”

“Actually we received a call from the head office this morning. After the video was shown yesterday, at least 7 million new users have signed up for New World. Can you believe it?”

Yes, that was the reason why Ho Myung-hwan was excited this morning. Thanks to Hyun-woo’s video, there was an explosion of interest in New World. The number of those people was 7 million! And 40,000 people have also bought the game unit. The unit was tens of millions of won and combined with the subscription amount for New World, Global Exos had received hundreds of billions in sales in just one day. It was an astronomical amount beyond imagination!

‘What? Then isn’t it Global Exos who received the profit in the end?’

He thought sarcastically. Anyway, the standards were in an entirely different world. Billions of won going into their pocket was like millions of won going into other people’s pocket.

‘Anyway, I still received 8 million won. In two months I can make 20 million won!’

His heart warmed after his wallet became thicker.

“I’ll treat you to a meal since you came all the way here.”

“Huh? No, you don’t have to.....”

“It’s okay. There is a place where I used to work part time near here. It won’t be a burden. It’s not a very expensive place.”

“Hah, then I guess..... Since it is already like this.....”

Ho Myung-hwan was unable to decline and ended up following Hyun-woo. After crossing several lanes.

“T-this is it?”

“The food here tastes pretty good. It was also a good job.”

Hyun-woo laughed as he looked at the simple tent erected on a vacant land. A phrase was written on top of the tent.

Assisted by the Youth Campaign (Sandwich: 2, 000 won. Proceeds will go towards public utilities.)

‘Someone who just received 8 million won is treating me to a 2,000 won sandwich?’

Ho Myung-hwan looked at Hyun-woo with an amazed expression. But Hyun-woo just lifted an eyebrow and ordered a sandwich before sitting down.

‘Buying a meal for 2,000 won is a luxury. By the way, my mother’s wheelchair is also very old. I have a large sum of money so I should change it to an electric wheelchair. Didn’t I see on the internet that the best electric wheelchair cost 6 million won? Well, it is fine if the price is that much.’

Hyun-woo smiled happily as he ate his sandwich.