

Ark Vol 18 C 7

Chapter 7

ACT 7 Lancel's New Town Plan

"Oppa, is it finished?"

Roco approached the warehouse with sparkling eyes. Ark nodded with a tired complexion and handed her a scroll.

"Yes, it's done. This is the catalogue."

"Wah, when arranged like this it really is no joke."

Roco's mouth widened as Ark handed her the scroll and she unfolded it. There were 10 scrolls with lists of various ingredients written on it.

'It was hard work but very rewarding.'

Ark looked at the scroll with satisfaction. After returning from the broadcasting station, Ark had stayed at the warehouse for several hours creating the scrolls. Thanks to that, Ark completely looked like a wet rag but he felt satisfied. It was unnecessary to explain again but the battle for Lancel village was vital for Ark. During that time he barely ate at all. He was so worried about the situation that he wondered if he would have to jump off the Han River Bridge. But thanks to some smart and excellent strategies, Ark had overcome the desperate crisis. And there was always a big chance after a crisis was conquered. Of course, not everyone received that chance after the crisis. The only way was to help themselves! Ark never stopped thinking about 'how can I earn money from this battle?' in every situation. Since chaotic users were attacking the village, Ark couldn't overlook the equipment of Jewel's group. When a chaotic user died, there was a 100% chance of dropping one equipment. In other words, the equipment piled up after wiping out Jewel's 500 strong group.

'The problem is how to collect all of it.'

Apart from the NPCs from the village, he had also mobilized 400 users in this defensive war. It would be impossible for him to remove all the users and collect the equipment. Of course, if Ark and Radun ran around then they could collect some equipment but a lot would be claimed by other users. It would be extremely vexing that he couldn't 100% monopolize it. Ark's pride couldn't tolerate having such a huge sum of money taken away. So he came up with the method to make Radun an airborne troop. Ark was able to grasp the battlefield thanks to the split screens. He instantly knew the location where a lot of Jewel's group had died. Once he received that information, he would send Radun wrapped around Racard to that area. It was a strategy to urgently swallow the items as soon as they dropped.

'Hopefully I can monopolize 30~40%! The problem is that the users might notice Radun.....'

But there was some unforeseen good fortune once the battle started. Heavy rain started pouring down. The dark clouds also obscured the sky making it a pitch black night. Moreover, the relentless rains turned the ground to mud. With Protective Colouration, Radun was difficult to distinguish by the users and he managed to swallow the equipment. And the darkness, rain and mud were all helpful to Radun. Radun used Stalking and could quickly find the equipment near the corpses before swallowing them. After swallowing too much, he would have to throw it up at the store's warehouse before returning to the battlefield. So Radun had managed to swallow 213 equipment! In addition, Ark had also collected 38 items while running around. The total sum was 251 equipment. Ark and Radun had managed to sweep up 50% of the loot!

'Ohhhh, this is spectacular!'

Ark shed impressed tears after the battle as he saw the 251 equipment piled up in the warehouse. A mountain of japtem! No, to be exact it was a pile of money!

'Now I just have to sell it!'

If he couldn't sell the lot then he wouldn't get any money from it. However, there was a problem when he thought about how to sell it. When he put the item in the bag there was no restrictions in volume but once taken outside it would return to the original volume. Furthermore, all the items collected this time was equipment. Just one metal armour would occupy considerable space. The store wouldn't be able to display all 251 equipment.

'I guess I have to display it little by little until it sells.....'

But the shelves in Ark's store were already filled with various items. Even if he created more space, he would only be able to display 10 equipment. He had more than 200 equipment yet he could only display 10.

'I have to think of a plan to quickly get rid of those items.....'

Then Ark had a sudden idea. It was to create a catalogue of the items. Armour, weapons, gloves, shoes, leathers, metal..... The equipment was divided into their category and the performance written down. If there was a detailed list then the shelves weren't necessary to promote the goods to customers. Yes, the scrolls Ark handed to Roco were the catalogue! Well, the idea of a catalogue wasn't exactly new. However, there was something different about the catalogue Ark created.

'I have to buy thing for as cheap as possible and then sell it for as high as possible. But it will irritate customers if I sell it for too high a price. The way to stimulate the customer's desire to buy.....'

Once again, Ark knew that the interest in Dark Wolf transcended imagination. Ark was confused by such popularity but he knew about the interest after his experience at the broadcasting station.

'There is no reason not to use it!'

Ark thought about using the name Dark Wolf for business. Ark had a description from Dark Wolf written on the catalogue for each item.

-Halben's Jack knife (Magic)

Armour type: Dagger

Attack: 20~22

Durability: 90/90

Weight: 20

User restriction: Level 220 or higher with Thief profession

A sharp retractable dagger. Among all dagger weapons, this one on average is one of the fastest. As the folding dagger is good for hiding it on the body, a lot of thieves tend to use it. Halben's jack knife is a cruel and brutal weapon known for having poison coated on it.

* Dark Wolf's Product Description: After trying it out, the 20% chance of poison is very good. Since a thief relies on continuous hits, a weapon which sucks health over time is the best type of weapon. It is recommended for both hunting and PVP. Your level might be insufficient but you won't regret it if you buy it in advance.

* Recommended price: 69 gold and 99 silver

-Old Steel Helmet

Armour type: Steel helmet

Defense: 48

Durability: 120/120

Weight: 33

User restriction: Level 200 or higher with Warrior profession

An ordinary steel helmet. The iron it is made of isn't very good so you can't expect a large defense from it.

* Dark Wolf's Product Description: If you look at the explanation then you know it is an ordinary helmet. But it only has 10 less defense than a magic helmet which costs 50 gold extra. In addition, the added stats on a magic helmet wouldn't be that much. If you consider the performance of the helmet and its price, this is a good fit with other magic items.

* Recommended price: 19 gold and 99 silver.....

It was a similar method as attaching the video of Dark Wolf to the auction site. In addition, he was even more famous than he was before! Dark Wolf was promoting items in the village where the actual Dark Wolf was active! Moreover, while Ark was creating the catalogue he restored the durability using Advanced Magic Restoration. It would be difficult to sell it while the durability was decreased from the battle. Therefore he worked several hours without a break restoring the items and writing their descriptions, but it was all for the sake of his future income.

'The equipment collected this time are mostly general items but I'm not upset about it.'

He knew that Jewel's group wouldn't drop any expensive equipment. The battle they started was one in which they risked life and death. Of course, they needed to secure a minimum offense and defense in order to increase the success rate so they used general items. And the rear support of the secret society were equipped with magic items. Surprisingly, the total sum for the products in the catalogue was 8,750 gold! He could obtain 87.5 million won from the 251 items Jewel dropped!

'As expected, war is the most profitable business to earn money.'

He earned that much income in one day so he couldn't feel tired. But that wasn't all of Ark's income.

"Take this."

"What, what is it?"

"It's the insurance money. If the users come then please check their contracts and distribute it."

Ark said as he handed her a large purse of money. Yes, it was the earnings from 'Ark's Compensation Insurance.' The insurance was needed in order to persuade users to enter the war after they worried about having their equipment stolen. But when considering the circumstances, it was quite a lucrative business. That's because during a war it wasn't profitable to continuously use the scrolls.

'That's it. That's at least 2,500 gold profit!'

As expected, Ark made a significant profit by the end of the fight. However, there were two unexpected variables at the very last moment.

'Those bastards, if they were going to die then they should've just died. Is this a joke? If they wanted to commit suicide then why didn't they just jump into the Han River?'

It was because of the suicide squad's biggest weapon. Since they were using a kamikaze style attack on the village, he had no choice but to extend the insurance payout to equipment that were broken from the Self-destruct. Thanks to that the damage of Lancel village barely stayed below 30% but he had to pay out a lot of insurance money. So the payout ended up adding to 1,800 gold!

'Well, there's still 700 gold remaining.....'

Their equipment broke but the users managed to stop the Self-destruct. If all the equipment broke he would've suffered a loss of 1000 gold. The thought of his 2500 gold being shaved down by 1800 gold was heartbreaking.

'It can't be helped. I made some profit so I should be satisfied.'

Ark soothed his pain with the thought. And the situation wasn't completely heartbreaking. He obtained 8,750 gold from the equipment. The insurance business was 700 gold. This clean-up of this battle alone got him a profit of 9,450 gold. He also received 8 million offline from signing the contract with the broadcasting station. On the other hand, not only did he take profit from Jewel's group but they were also in jail. Even if he couldn't put all 500 members into a jail cell, putting half of them in wasn't bad. He had managed to eradicate some pests and make money.

'As expected, a person has to have an aggressive mind.'

He never would've got all of this if he kept his passive attitude! But Ark had no intention of being satisfied with this much.

'This victory is just a foothold in my future plans.'

Ark sensed the time to start the plan he prepared beforehand was fast approaching. No, to be exact it had already begun.

'But it is still premature. There is still a lot of work to be done. And the thing that is most necessary is money. I've put most of it into real estate but I still need a bit more. I need to tighten my belt even more!'

"Oppa where are you going?"

Roco's voice who received the insurance payout could be heard.

"Well, I need to do a few things before I return."

"You will return to the warehouse later? It's been a while since I've seen you."

Roco whined like a child. And Sapjil and Ulmeok who were carrying things from the warehouse to store looked like they wanted to vomit. Then Roco turned her back and started whistling as she looked at the distant mountains. Ark laughed before tapping Roco on the back and said.

"I understand. When my business ends then we'll go hunting together."

"Really? You promise?"

Roco laughed and returned to the store. Ark exited the store and walked around surveying the village. The shattered wreckage of buildings caught his eye. At the end of the battle, Ark confirmed that 23% of the structures had been damaged. It wasn't a small amount of damage. That meant 1 in 4 buildings had

received damage. And out of the 60 buildings damaged, 30 had been so destroyed that repairing them was impossible. Just looking around the town it could be seen how intense the battle was. Therefore the real estate market price had fallen by 30% compared to before the battle. Ark had a 4% stake in Lancel village so he also suffered significant losses. But Ark didn't worry about it.

'It is highly likely that this battle will cause Lancel village to grow instead.'

After the TV broadcast of the Lancel defensive war, it wasn't just Dark Wolf, Shambala, Bread and Redian who became famous. Lancel which was the stage for the battle also became incredibly famous. It hadn't even been one day since the battle ended yet a large number of users had flocked from nearby areas. It was similar to tourists gathering at movie or drama location shoots.

"Wah, it really is the same as what I saw on TV."

"Look here. This is the building that was destroyed by the thieves' Self-destruct skill."

"Ohhhh! I saw it, I saw it."

"Let's take a photo here!"

They users went around taking photos of the building wreckage. Ark couldn't understand why but it was good that a lot of people had gathered. The development of an NPC village depended on how many users visited it. Money was always located where a lot of people gathered. Without this fame, it would take a long time for the real estate market to recover.

'If a lot of users gathered then it's not unpleasant.'

Ark smirked and exited the residential area. Then he suddenly saw Bread hiding behind a building. Bread had played the game for almost 24 hours so he disconnected for a bit.

"Hey, Bread!"

Ark waved his hand and approached as he found Bread. Then Bread jumped with astonishment and quickly looked around. He sighed with relief as he saw Ark and grabbed his arm before pulling him behind a building.

“What? What is it?”

“Shhh, Shhh! You idiot, don’t be so loud!”

Bread looked around and whispered in a low voice.

“What’s going on? Did you meet a debt collector or something?”

“Damn.....I would’ve preferred the creditors.”

Bread sighed before suddenly glaring at Ark.

“Yes, that’s right. You are the source. This is all your fault!”

“What are you talking about? What did I do?”

“If you hadn’t shown my face on TV.....”

“Are you running away from creditors who found you?”

“That’s not it! Are you playing around?”

Bread looked at Ark with an angry expression. The reason Bread was in a 100% annoyed state was because of the users gathered in Lancel village. Yes, Bread’s face was shown nationwide on the TV.

In other words he had become famous. Of course, Bread and Redian were already known as Bristania’s strongest pair so they were already celebrities. But their previous success was nothing compared to

what happened after their faces were shown on TV. The users who found Bread and Redian in the village flocked like sparrows that had discovered earthworms.

“What are your levels?”

“What technique was that? Where did you learn it from?”

“What equipment do you use? I also wear leather equipment so where can I get some as good as yours?”

Bread and Redian were annoyed by their relentless chirping.

“.....If it was just that much I could endure it. It is just like Paradox.

Bread sighed and shook his head. The problem was the school aged users. When creating a character in New World, it was possible to choose the age. Thus it was impossible to know the user's actual age just looking at the character's appearance. But it was possible to tell if someone often played online games. Who the school aged children were.....Of course, they didn't vary that much from general users. The problem was that the childish users often didn't let go once they caught something. And Bread had been tightly caught by them.

“Hey, are you Bread?”

“How did you fight that well? Can you teach me?”

The childish users chased after Bread like goldfish. Thanks to that, Bread's blood pressure went up as he couldn't escape them. But how could the village hero murder them? While Bread was chaotic, he had been using the [Lie] scroll in order to prevent being kicked out of the village. The same went for Redian. Furthermore, the opponents were just kids. Wouldn't it be slightly embarrassing if they used their power on them? Therefore Redian had separated from Bread and disconnected. However, Bread had a reason for not stopping the connection like Redian.

“Damn! I decided to go hunting with the Wolrang at a nearby cave but I can't do that with those kids around. The Wolrang will have to wait.”

After participating in the battle, his intimacy with the Wolrang had increased greatly. Therefore, Bread's dream of having a good relationship with the dog/wolf was coming true. That was the best reward Bread got from this battle! And as soon as the battle ended, he made an appointment to go hunting with the Wolrang. But now he couldn't go to the meeting place while being chased after by the schoolchildren. If they chased him all the way to the hunting grounds then it would be unbearable. The dreadful power of the schoolchildren made the level 410 Bread hide from them! How should he say it.....? Was it courageous or ignorant?

'Tsk tsk tsk, this is really troublesome.'

Anyway, Ark looked at Bread with pitying eyes after understanding the circumstances. But this problem occurred because he didn't wear a mask or transform himself like Ark. But hiding the face after finally getting to go on TV was a bit.....

"Then keep up the effort. I have things to do. I hope you escape safely."

"W-wait a minute, can't you do something?"

"Like what?"

"You're more famous than me. If you transform into Dark Wolf and attract their attention....."

"No thanks."

After transforming into Dark Wolf, Ark would be buried in users. Why would he intentionally transform himself into Dark Wolf? When Ark snorted and refused, Bread shouted angrily.

"Do you really want to be that uncooperative? Because of you I participated in the war....."

"Ah, there he is!"

“I’ve found him. Catch him!”

At that time a hobbit shouted and pointed towards Bread. It was the childish users annoying Bread. Bread’s face instantly became confused as the hobbit appeared and he ran away. Then the hobbit cursed and started chasing after Bread.

“Damn Ark, you should help me a little bit!”

‘How? The schoolkids are frightening. I’ll just pretend I didn’t see this.....’

Ark pretended not to hear Bread’s SOS and turned around. Then a playful smile spread on his face as he wandered around.

‘Speaking of which, how is that guy doing?’

“Blue Sword!”

Ark looked around as a hobbit yelled. The place it was coming from was the wreckage of a building. One man was sitting down in front of it. It was the masked Shambala wearing black clothes. The hobbits had found another celebrity and flocked around Shambala.

“Oh thanks Ark! Shambala, I’ll leave this to you!”

The hobbits who had been chasing Bread showed interest in Shambala and Bread instantly escaped. Meanwhile, the hobbits just laughed at the sight of their new toy.

“Hahaha, you’re Blue Sword?”

“What the, this is?”

Shambala looked at the hobbits with bewildered eyes. While he had been lost in thought, he hadn't realized he was in the same area as Bread and Ark.

"Are you pretending ignorance?"

"How did you fight that well? Can you teach me?"

"Huhuhu, if you want to hit then hit me. The guards will protect us!"

The hobbits laughed as they irritated Shambala.

'Now, what will Shambala do?'

Ark smirked and waited for Shambala's reaction. Then Shambala rose from his seat without speaking a word. Then he opened both hands and swept the hobbits inside the dim alley. Shambala's voice could then be heard from the alley.

"Death's Agent....."

Bam, bam, bam, bam, bam, bam!

"Hik, what, what the?"

"What is with this person? S-save me....heok!"

After a while, a hobbit crawled from the alley with a bruised face. But before the hobbit could escape the alley, a hand grabbed his ankle and dragged him back in. And the sounds started again.

'He took care of the schoolkids situation in seconds. What a scary guy.....'

Shambala was completely different from Bread. If he didn't like someone then he would beat them up. That was Shambala! However, Shambala also had a weakness. After beating up the schoolkids, Shambala once again appeared and flopped down in front of the shattered building with a sigh.

"Damn! How dare they destroy Seutandal's branch here with Self-destruct? If she finds out that it has been destroyed then Isabel will be worried..... It can't be helped. I'll have to secretly fix it before Isabel finds out, even if I have to use my personal funds. No. 358, keep it a secret from Isabel that our branch has received damage. Understood? By the way, do you know what is necessary to repair this building?"

Shambala sighed again as he rummaged through his bag.

Yes, the buildings damaged by the battle would be repaired using the village's public funds. However, the Seutandal branch was the property of the Eastern Nation. Thus the Eastern Nation would have to bear the cost of the repair fees.

"Bread and Shambala, everyone has their own worries."

Ark clicked his tongue as he stared at the dismal looking Shambala.

"Well, it's none of my business. Their weaknesses make them easy to use."

Ark muttered with an evil smile. Bread and Redian really liked dogs and cats. Isabel was also Shambala's weakness. Once Ark grasped their weaknesses, he was able to use it to his advantage. Actually Shambala, Bread and Redian had participated in the battle because of that. Therefore he couldn't understand their complicated lives.

"Compared to that money isn't bad. It is simple."

Ark muttered before turning to the residents with a dark look and sighing. The smile on Ark's face had completely disappeared. In fact, Ark didn't just feel satisfied from the results of this battle. While Shambala had a weakness, Ark also had something like that.

'The NPCs that I know and associated with.....'

Ark looked at the NPCs with a bittersweet look. They were NPCs who had lost family in the battle. Yes, the damage was less than expected but 13% of residents were still lost. The total population was 700 people and 13% of that had died. That was 90 NPCs sacrificed. Of course, this battle determined whether Lancel was destroyed or not. He knew that a certain amount would be lost but the 13% sacrifice was more than expected.

‘Theoretically I know. Although I know.....’

If it was a different place then he would’ve enjoyed the victory. However, Ark was the one who convinced the residents to relocate to Lancel. While Ark had been worried about Lancel’s future, they were all power Ark had been acquainted with. Those NPCs had disappeared. While users could just revive, the NPCs were an existence that disappeared when they died so his chest was in pain.

‘But.....’

The NPCs were already dead. Galen had already arranged for the funerals of the victims and paid compensation to their grieving families so there was nothing he could do.

‘Yes, my chest hurts because of the NPCs but let’s think about protecting the ones remaining. Now I have to quickly begin my plan for the remaining NPCs. I have to stop even more NPCs from being sacrificed.’

Ark became determined and headed towards the Town Hall. Ark had already made some plans for the future after the battle finished. No, it was because of the battle that his plans for the future became clear. But before that plan could be implemented, he had to clean up everything first. One of them was the quest. Since the battle finished, he was going to receive the compensation and then start the next plan.

“Although the sacrifice of the residents is heartbreaking, but public affairs was public affairs. I have to bring all things to an end. Now the chances of Galen giving a rare or unique item wasn’t very high. Then will I be given more shares in the village?”

Ark tilted his head at the thought of the compensation.

“A share in the village isn’t bad. Even if it is 1% and the market price fell, it would still be 2,000 gold. Besides, once the price increases in the future then it will be 100 times better than an item. But nevertheless, there is a possibility that he will give an item as reward. Perhaps? Maybe Galen has a heirloom hidden or something?”

It was a quest which took 1 year and 6 months to complete! Whatever compensation it was, Ark couldn’t be disappointed.

‘Finally.....!’

After a short time, Ark arrived at the Town Hall. Then he entered with his heart pounding.

“Ark, you’ve come!”

Galen who was at the Town Hall grabbed Ark’s hand.

‘Ohh, was he waiting for me to come?’

Ark came to a hasty conclusion and became even more eager. Anyway, Galen knew he liked money. Wasn’t it a nice feeling when an NPC was eager to hand over compensation?

“Well, it is natural. Don’t you know? Lancel village is like my home. Fighting for Lancel village is an honourable thing to me. You can ask for anything in the future.”

“Ohhh, thank you. As expected, I can only believe in you!”

“Hahaha! Well, it is natural.....”

Ark boldly laughed and secretly reached out his hand. He was expecting to receive his reward now. And Galen nodded before pulling out a scroll and handed it to him.

'Scroll? Is the compensation a share in the village?'

That was the only thing he could think when seeing the scroll.

'A share in the village isn't bad. The question is how much percentage I was given..... Huh?'

Perplexity spread on Ark's face as he opened the scroll. The scroll didn't indicate a transfer of village shares.

Village Reconstruction Supervisore Appointment

You have been nominated by the council of Lancel Village to be in charge of the village reconstruction. The guidelines for the reconstruction work are enclosed on the reverse side.

Temporary mayor of Lancel village, Galen.

'What is this? Village Reconstruction Supervisor Appointment? Is this really the reward?'

Ark looked at the appointment scroll with a stupid expression. Then Galen tapped Ark's shoulder and said.

"Although I should be the one in charge of the work, there is an urgent situation and I need to leave for several days. So I wanted to choose the right person. You're the only one I can entrust it to. I feel sorry for dumping this on you but I am relieved by your previous words. Then please do this for me."

"You're going? Where are you going? No, my reward.....?"

"I'm sorry. I'm really in a hurry. I'll give you the details when I return."

“W-wait a minute!”

“I’ll be back in a few days!”

Galen then disappeared into the crowd. After Galen disappeared, a quest information window appeared in front of Ark.

sub quest has been updated.

* Sub quest: Lancel village defensive war= Lancel village’s reconstruction project

Thanks to your efforts, Lancel village has been protected from a band of thieves. Unfortunately, the damage Lancel village received wasn’t a small amount. If it is left alone then the satisfaction of the residents will fall.

The war will only truly end when the village is restored to its previous state. The interim mayor Galen has left the village reconstruction to you who have obtained the trust of the residents. Repair the village within the budget of Lancel village. You cannot fail this quest. However, if you give up this quest then you can’t receive any compensation for the quest.

‘Sub quest?’

Ark read the information window with shocked eyes. When Galen had run away and pushed the quest on him, anger instantly welled up. He went to all that trouble during the Lancel defensive war and now he had to reconstruct the village as well?

‘What? Isn’t this just taking advantage of a nice guy? I might be busy……’

Now he had to do this task as well. At that moment, some raccoon workmen wearing helmets emerged from the crowd.

“Ark-nim, please give us some orders.”

“Damn, I don’t know!”

Ark snapped at the raccoons, causing them to flinch. They suddenly looked at Ark with worried eyes before starting to back away.

“Why all of a sudden?”

“I don’t know, but he doesn’t seem pleasant right now.”

“What do we do? The water is already drying up and we don’t know where to start working.”

“But we have to repair the damaged buildings as well.”

“We need instructions from Ark-nim to begin that work.”

“Yes, we’ll have to talk to him even if he looks unpleasant.”

The raccoons finished a sneaky work meeting and approached.

“Ark-nim, do you want us to rebuild Lancel village the same way as it previously was?”

“I don’t care!”

Ark yelled and turned his body. He knew there was an audience. But despite it being a quest, wasn’t it too horrible? Telling a person expecting compensation to suddenly supervise the reconstruction? Although he could receive additional compensation depending on the percentage of compensation, Ark didn’t care about the reconstruction work. The raccoons were the ones clearing the debris of the collapsed building so what could Ark do?

'Damn, that quest is just a waste of time!'

Ark complained and was returning to his store. Then there was an abrupt spark in his brain.

'Wait? Reconstruction? Construction?'

Ark stopped walking and looked around with bemused eyes. The village entrance, plaza, shopping centre and residential street. Ark looked at the structure of the village before he had an idea.

'Maybe.....this might be a chance..... No.....it definitely is an opportunity!'

Ark reached that conclusion and immediately returned to the Town Hall. Then he interrupted the raccoons who were about to return to their workshop and laughed.

"I gratefully accept the position as supervisor of the Lancel Reconstruction Project. Before starting work, please have a filling meal. You'll need your strength for the work."

"Ark-nim, the wood has arrived!"

A group of raccoons arrived carrying a bunch of wood planks.

"Don't disrupt the passage so set it down in that corner."

"Ark-nim, the stone has arrived!"

"It'll be used to repair the outer stone walls so please pile it up there."

Ark flew around and issued orders. Once Ark accepted the supervisor role, the Lancel Reconstruction Project began in earnest.

Ddok ttak, ddok ttak, ssuk ssak, ssuk ssak!

Excited sounds rang out through the village.

The wreckage of the old buildings was cleared away and scaffolds for the new buildings were erected. The former thieves who had changed professions to workmen from the raccoons were hammering in nails at the scaffolds for the new buildings. The scene really looked like the construction of a new village. Once all the NPCs in Lancel were mobilized, the entrance already looked like the old one. However, Ark's goal wasn't to restore the 'old look.'

'Was I crazy? Did I really say there was no profit from this?'

Yes, previously Ark hadn't cared about the reconstruction project. Therefore there was no need for him to help out or give individual orders.

'Huhuhu, luckily I thought of an amazing idea!'

Ark smiled and praised himself.

"Ark-nim."

One of the raccoons called out to him and approached.

"I've been looking at the blueprints distributed by Ark-nim. Those buildings over there are so damaged that we'll have to destroy it while it is possible to restore that building. But there is a building that isn't shown on the blueprint. Was there a mistake?"

The raccoon pointed to a building at the entrance of the village. In fact, most of the Lancel buildings damaged were in a similar style. There were several buildings which the suicide squad didn't directly hit.

Since the users stopped the suicide squad, most of the buildings had been indirectly damaged. The building the raccoon indicated had a perfect interior but several cracks on the outer walls. However, Ark shook his head.

“No, it’s not a mistake.”

“Huh? Then?”

“Destroy any buildings that aren’t listened on the blueprint.”

“Destroy? But the building can be repaired and used.....”

The raccoon couldn’t understand Ark’s words.

“Can’t you understand by looking at the blueprint? The front of that building is blocking the entrance. It is the first thing that guests here will see. Of course it can be repaired but wouldn’t the marks from repairing it make it an unseemly sight? I don’t want that building to be the first image of our village. Would you want the village to be disagreeable to guests?”

“But it will look better if we repair it.....”

“Are you the supervisor?”

Ark shot the raccoon an annoyed look. Then the raccoon hung his tail and hesitated.

“I have my own way of thinking. Stop chattering and just do it.”

“I understand.”

The raccoon nodded and turned around. Then Ark opened the blueprint and checked it again.

“Ah, and build a new road from the building and heading to this direction. The necessary materials for the road are prepared and flank the road on both sides with a flowerbed. The seedlings are already prepared by the Meow so you just have to put down the foundations.”

“A road?”

“Well, the village will grow in the future so we’ll have to do some readjustments to the village plan. We don’t want to be inferior to other villages.”

Ark laughed as he spoke.

‘Okay, it is gradually turning into the village I want.’

Ark looked proudly at the village that was slowly changing. Yes, the reason why Ark changed his mind about the reconstruction project was because he thought ‘this is the chance to make the village I want.’ In fact, Ark hadn’t really liked the previous structure of Lancel village. The original Lancel village was a small mountain village with 30 buildings. And it had been 1 year and 6 months. It had grown increasingly larger as more beasts and people resettled here. Therefore the 30 buildings kept on increasing as more residents moved here. Gradually stores popped up and the place where there were no buildings became the town square.

It was no different from a real growth process. Thus there were also issues that occurred in reality. Just like any old city, it wasn’t really balanced. From the beginning a large town hadn’t been planned so they just built buildings where necessary. Sometimes houses made of wood or stone were mixed indiscriminately, and sometimes lanes were blocked by a new building. It was so uncomfortable that sometimes the people living there would have to exit through their neighbour’s back door. Ark thought the reconstruction project was a good chance to fix the issue.

‘Fortunately Lancel village has abundant public funds.’

When he first thought up the plans, Ark had checked the amount of public funds available. If there wasn’t an abundant budget then it wasn’t possible to begin the construction. But the budget was really rich.

Lancel village was one co-produced and built by the ex-thieves, raccoons, Meow and the Wolrang. So the proceeds earned in the village went into the public funds. Thus the reconstruction business didn’t

just involve the collapsed buildings. Anyway, thanks to that the public funds weren't a problem. Ark also hadn't used any of the public funds to hire users so he could invest that money back into the reconstruction projects. And the person in charge of the reconstruction was Ark! As the supervisor Ark visited the cartographer Hanson. Then he commissioned him to produce a perfect town blueprint.

"It is a good idea. The structure of the town has also been weighing on my mind. The village will have to do some maintenance if it wants to grow bigger in the future."

Hanson strongly agreed with Ark's idea and spent all night working on the blueprint. Then he handed the blueprint to the raccoons. However, Ark's wicked scheme was hidden in the blueprint.

'Huhuhu, if the village changes according to the plan.....'

The appearance of Lancel village would certainly be cleaner than before. However, it was entirely for the sake of Lancel village. Once again, Lancel village was recovering from an attack by Jewel's group. And Jewel's main target was Ark's store. Therefore the suicide squads had headed towards Ark's store from the entrance. In other words, the buildings that received the most damage were between the village entrance and Ark's store! Then couldn't he use it as an excuse to remove all the buildings during the reconstruction project?

'Then Ark's store can be seen as seen as someone enters the village!'

Yes, this was the hidden motive behind Ark's reconstruction projects. In fact, Ark had another reason not to like the structure of Lancel village. Thanks to Ark's hard work, he had finally managed to receive a store building in the village. The building was located deep in the residential section of the village. Thus it was hard for users to find Ark's store when they first entered the village. Even if they had visited beforehand and knew where the location was, they would have to travel through a complicated route from the shopping area to reach Ark's store.

'I can't afford to have any customers stolen away by NPC stores. All the users who come to Lancel are my customers! I can't miss even one customer.'

Therefore Ark removed all the buildings blocking his store and built a road to it.

‘Once entering the village, it will be visible within 3 minutes!’

This was Ark’s final goal with the reconstruction project. And the plan became obvious in a few days. After knocking down the buildings according to the blueprint, Ark’s shop could be seen from three village entrances.

However it wasn’t enough!

“Now lay out the road and create the flower bed!”

Ark started the 2nd stage after the building finished being demolished. It was a road connected Ark’s store to the village entrance. But the road had been completely designed by Ark. Using black and white pebbles, he created a design of an arrow on the road. The arrow pointed right to Ark’s store! The flower beds were also the same. The plants and flowers were carefully laid and pruned to lead towards Ark’s store. Now any users who entered the village would unconsciously look at Ark’s store. And the third thing was the new signposts in the village.

→Shopping area

← Village square

↑ Residential area (Ark’s Store)

.....There was no need to explain the village signpost. The entire village was like an advertisement for Ark’s store! Of course, protests came in from other NPC stores. But the supervisor in charge of the reconstruction project was Ark! Ark played dumb and pretended not to know anything.

“Eh? Why are the paving stones laid like this? What happened to the flower bed? Hah, this sign..... He pretended that something had gone wrong with the task instructions.

“But it can’t be helped. All this time and money has been spent so how can we just demolish the road? The next chance I have I’ll adjust it.”

Ark's skill to prevaricate was just like a politician's. And thanks to the TV broadcast, many players flocked to Ark's store as planned. But Ark wasn't satisfied with just that. He had to strike while it was still hot.

-There is an enormous volume of equipment guaranteed by Dark Wolf!

It is a great opportunity to purchase level 150~300 equipment at a cheap price!

* A three day 10% sales event is in progress.

Ark had placed such placards in front of his store. It was an opportunity to get rid of the equipment obtained from Jewel's group. As planned, the users flocked around the catalogue and ordered goods.

"I want item no. 96, the jack knife that Dark Wolf used directly!"

"Item no. 140 that Dark Wolf recommended, the Nameless Bow!"

Once one item sold, a fire would be lit and the remaining items sold. The other goods in the store would also be sold.

"I have change left so give me one herbal medicine set!"

"Two potions please!"

"Ah, yes yes!"

Sapjil and Ulmeok said with tearful eyes as they took the orders. They were so busy that Ark's summons had to be put to work.

"Well, well! Who ordered the potions just now?"

“Me!”

A user’s hands raised as Racard flew over their heads. Then Racard headed towards the user with Radun clinging to him.

“Here are your things!”

Ssak ssak ssak, ssak ssak ssak ssak!

Radun’s mouth opened and he spat out the potion.

“Give the money to the skeleton over there. Next, the person who ordered the herbal medicine set.”

Clack clack clack, clack clack clack clack!

While Racard flew to other users, the skeletal Razak approached the user. With a clink clink, the potions were paid for and the skeleton laughed before approaching the next customer. There were so many guests that they all couldn’t enter the store, so Ark used his summons for a street sale. But the desperate plan he came up with was more popular than expected.

“A bat is taking our orders while a snake spits it out?”

“This skeleton is receiving the money without any supervision? So fun!”

“That skeleton was also on TV! The one with the fire shield!”

“I’ve also seen that bat and snake before. They were with Dark Wolf!”

“So this shop really is related to Dark Wolf!”

“How amazing. I’m here so one scroll please!”

“Me too! One herbal medicine set!”

‘Huhuhu, I am the Dark Wolf you’re talking about.’

Ark looked at the users gathered in front of the store from far away and laughed. The gold was flying from their hands into Ark’s pocket!

‘The reconstruction of Lancel’s new town plan is 80% complete. The remainder is entrusted to the raccoons.’

But Ark still had one thing to do that was separate from the reconstruction. The work related to Ark’s store was just a part of it. Ark called over the raccoons.

“Have you finished the construction on the square? Now I want a new structure to be built near the centre of the square. Please refer to the draft on the reverse side of the blueprint.”

“Huh? This wasn’t in the plans.....”

The raccoons carefully looked at the draft. The structure Ark wanted built was a huge tower 10 metre in height. It was a flash tower made of marble! It was a structure that used 4,000 gold in the budget by itself.

“But it is an essential structure. Please hurry.”

Ark ordered with determination. Then the raccoons started to express their dissatisfaction.

“What? This structure?”

“It also seems like there is some writing on the outside of the structure.”

“Don’t tell me it is a propaganda signboard for Ark’s store?”

“The village has been attacked and everybody is in great pain but Ark-nim is only using the public money to advertise his store.....I’m disappointed.”

It was impossible for the NPCs doing the reconstruction not to figure out that the reconstruction was just improving the location of Ark’s store. Even if he was the saviour who helped the village, it was too much. And now he wanted them to do this as well? The residents of the village were still grieving and they couldn’t stand such greed! Even if the residents trusted Ark unconditionally, this was too much for them.

“What are you doing? I told you to hurry!”

But Ark just rushed the residents without worrying about their dissatisfaction. Despite their complaints, Ark was the supervisor so they started work on the structure. After two days passed, a 10 metre high marble tower was constructed in the centre of the village square.

“Hmm, it turned out better than I thought.”

Ark looked at the brilliant finished tower with satisfaction. Then he gave the raccoons new commands.

“Now I want these letters carved on the surface of the tower.”

‘Indeed.....’

Dissatisfaction appeared on the raccoons’ faces at Ark’s order. They thought that it would definitely be an advertisement for Ark’s store. But confusion spread over the raccoons’ faces after receiving the phrases.

“Eh? T-this.....?”

“That’s the phrases I want carved on the tower.”

When Ark smiled and spoke, the raccoons looked at him with uncontrollable emotions in their eyes. Then they spoke in an apologetic tone.

“To even consider this idea.....”

“Without knowing about Ark’s idea, we selfishly.....”

“Stop talking and start working instead. Please put off all other projects and complete this tower as quickly as possible.”

The embarrassed Ark turned his head and said.

“Yes, Ark-nim!”

Since then, the raccoons worked 100 times faster and swung their hammers like crazy. Without any more complaints, it was possible to carve the words on the tower in just one day.

‘It is only 70% complete but it isn’t necessary to wait until it is completed to show it.’

“Now, gather the residents in the square. We will reveal the tower!”

Ark immediately called the residents to the square. While work on the tower had been ongoing, it had been covered with a tent. Thus the residents didn’t know anything about the tower. And finally the tent was pulled down.

“What? This tower is?”

“Eh? The words recorded there.....?”

“Oh, that is.....!”

Exclamations fell from the residents’ mouths after they saw the tower.

Victims of the Lancel Battle Remembrance Memorial

The residents who didn’t regret sacrificing their lives for Lancel. It was only thanks to them that it was possible to protect Lancel village. They are the true heroes of the battle. We’re alive thanks to their sacrifice so we should not forget their names. Their names are carved on this monument and their descendants should tell any visitors to this place about their courage and sacrifice.

Yes, the tower Ark built in the centre of the square was a memorial. The names of the 90 victims from the battle were carved onto the memorial.

‘The victims can’t be repaid with just this but.....’

The victims in this battle had weighed on Ark’s mind. If he had countermeasures for the suicide squad beforehand then so many victims wouldn’t have died. Of course Ark couldn’t predict every situation but the fact that NPCs he was acquaintances with were dead was heartbreaking. Since it was a virtual reality game, there was little difference from grieving in real life.

‘Can I do anything for them?’

He was thinking this. Even though Galen gave compensation to the families of the victims, Ark also wanted to do something for them. And he thought of the memorial after taking over the reconstruction. He wanted to give a small consolation to the victim’s family and friends.

‘Seeing this for the first time is embarrassing.....’

Ark scratched his head as he looked at the memorial. Suddenly the teary residents mobbed him.

“Thank you Ark-nim!”

“These guys.....I’m really proud when thinking that they protected a nice village like this!”

“We are proud of them too!”

The residents spoke in teary voices. There was a ringing sound and an information window appeared in front of Ark.

-You have built a memorial in Lancel village.

You have completed the memorial in memory of the resident who sacrificed their lives in the battle. The memorial will be a source of comfort to many residents who have lost their family. With the names of the people who bravely sacrificed their lives to defend Lancel village carved on the memorial, all their descendants will be able to feel pride whenever they see the memorial.

* Bond among the village residents increased by 50%.

(When specific events occur in the village, the bond will either increase or decrease depending on the solution. When the bond is high, it will have a significant effect on the town’s satisfaction, harmony and even development. In addition, a drop in this value will increase the number of disagreements among residents.)

-Your degree of intimacy with the residents increased with the completion of the memorial.

* Your intimacy with the village residents has increased over 100% and you’ve reached ‘Respected’ status. The ‘Respected’ status is the best evidence of a close relationship with NPCs. If a ‘Respected’

person requests something from the NPC, they will absolutely not refuse even if it is illegal or they have to sacrifice their lives. If you have the respect of the residents then everything is possible.

‘One part is over.’

Thanks to the completion of the memorial, the bond between residents and even his intimacy with them had increased. But the biggest effect of the memorial was the bright expressions on the faces of the residents. Thus his uncomfortable feeling was shaken off after the construction of the memorial. Despite the reconstruction project, there was still one major problem.

‘I’ve succeeded in making visitors concentrate on Ark’s store. I also feel better after building the memorial. But I’ve realized a huge problem thanks to Jewel’s group. The utmost priority is to secure the safety. Until now he thought it was 100% safe to leave his assets in a NPC village.....’

To be honest, there had been no cases of users attacking an NPC village until Jewel’s group. However, such a thing actually happened. And thanks to it being broadcasted on the TV, all users knew about it. The broadcast wasn’t small and the ripples of it would spread throughout New World. New World had a huge number of chaotic users. In order to oppose the chaotic users, hunter guilds and guards were gradually organized. Jewel’s attack on Lancel made them realize that it was possible to attack NPC villages. That meant Lancel village was exposed to chaotic users.

‘And all my assets are tied up in Lancel.’

He had Ark’s store and also the shares of Lancel. It was an enormous amount of money. What would happen if other thieves attacked and captured it? No matter how much money he earned, he would just become a beggar. Of course, it wasn’t easy for chaotic users to attack a village. There were many reasons why but the penalty caused by dying to guards wasn’t a joke. In order to attack a village, a minimum of hundreds of personnel was required which wasn’t easy to gather for chaotic users. But the largest reason was that there was no huge benefit to attacking a NPC village. Even if 10,000 gold was available, they would only be able to loot 10% of it. But that was different if there was a store managed by a user in the village. If certain conditions were met then it was possible to steal 100% of a user’s property. Even if there was a huge penalty, that target would present a challenge for chaotic users.

‘Having a store in a small village is a problem.’

Ark sighed.

‘Such things won’t happen easily but it could.....’

And even if other thieves didn’t move, there was still Jewel’s group. Even if the attack failed, those guys wouldn’t leave easily. With Jewel and Duke as their leaders, there was no guarantee they wouldn’t attack Lancel again.

‘Fortunately, the Letter Movement tower is now completed. If something happens then we can get support troops from Jackson and Giran. But the number of people that can move using the magic tower is subject to restrictions. The Lancel magic tower isn’t huge so it can only move 100 people. And if affected by Self-destruct then it might not function properly.’

In fact, Ark had only been able to protect the magic tower and Ark’s store this time thanks to Shambala’s information. If they were attacked without prior notice then it wouldn’t be possible to call for support troops. He was severely worried about those few things. But he couldn’t get rid of his store and shares and run away.

‘Then the only remaining way is to raise Lancel’s defences!’

Yes, if their defense was increased then the problem would be settled. Once again, there were almost no stores managed by a user in a small NPC village. User-run stores were more common in large cities like Giran, Jackson or Selebrid. And enormous profit could be gained when looting a user’s store. If chaotic users occupied a large city then they could quickly become game tycoons. But there were two reasons why chaotic users didn’t do that. The first reason was that large amounts of troops resided in a large city. The number and level of regular troops stationed at large cities was also set at 10% higher than the users. Users couldn’t easily attack. And the second reason was the large number of users gathered in major cities. The level and number of users who gathered in large cities was completely different from Lancel. There were tens of thousands of people! If anyone tried to attack then the users would step on them.

‘Lancel is a free village. It belongs to Jackson but doesn’t have to pay them taxes. While they can send support troops, regular troops can’t be stationed there. And there was no merit for tens of thousands of users to flock to the village. There is one last way method to try.’

Ark thought for a while before trying out one last method. The last stage of the reconstruction business is to raise the defences of Lancel! If it went as planned then he didn't have to worry about the security of Lancel village anymore!

'The security measures are necessary to prevent the village residents from being sacrificed again. Yes, the security measures are indispensable to save my assets and prevent the loss of NPCs. And....it won't be easy but it is possible!'

Thus Ark immediately initiated his plan.