

Ark Vol 19 C 1

Chapter 1

ACT 1 War Preparations

-The new facility 'Office of the Lord' has been registered in the name of Ark-nim.

The 'Office of the Lord' is a necessary space for the Lord of any territory and is a symbol of pride. The Lord will be able to confirm various details about the territory from the office and a loyalty bonus will be applied to help the development of the territory. When working on territory related business here, the progress rate will increase by 1.5 times.

* Progress rate of all territory related business increases by 1.5 times in this office.

* Development of the territory when the Lord stays in the office increases by 1.2 times.

* The resident bond and loyalty when the Lord stays in the office will increase by 1.2 times.

"Do you like the office?"

Galen indicated the wide office with a satisfied expression.

"It can't be helped even if you don't like it. This is the Lord's private office now."

It had been 4 days since Ark became the Lord of Lancel. The original Town Hall was a three storey building, with the 1st floor being the meeting room, the 2nd floor the complaints room and the 3rd floor was Galen's office. So until now Ark hadn't had an office. However Ark didn't care about that.

'I might be the Lord but I can't spend a lot of time in Lancel. Galen will take over as the mayor when I'm gone so I don't need to bother with the office.'

If he wanted to create the office then he would have to use the public funds. But now things had changed. Lancel was Ark's territory, not simple a place where he had invested in the real estate. In other words, he used to be a stockholder in the Lancel Corporation and now he was the CEO. So his viewpoint about the territory had also changed.

'How Lancel develops will depend on me. If the territory develops then its income and fame will rise. So I can't use the public funds of the territory lightly.'

Ark was the type of user who could give up 1 gold today for 2 gold tomorrow. Because it was the public funds, he couldn't afford to spend it freely. But Galen was firm on this decision.

"It might be uncomfortable for Lord-nim but it will be worse for the residents if this office wasn't here. I know that Lord-nim will be absent a lot of times. But the Lord's office isn't just a place for business. It is a symbol of Lancel's Lord and VIPs from other areas will be offended if there wasn't this office to greet them in."

Galen used to be the temporary mayor and now his title had changed to the Lord's secretary so he was more assertive than before. Ark had risen from a shareholder to the president. So Galen who was in charge of maintaining the village was like a Director? Anyway, Ark could find no justification to oppose Galen's decision. Thus Galen pushed and encouraged the residents and after 4 days, the Lord's office had been constructed as the 4th floor of the Town Hall.

"Everything in the office is made of top quality products. The villagers also prepared the interior decorations. The raccoons constructed the table and chairs, while the ex-thieves who had taken lessons from them manufactured the tapestries and shelves. The leather goods on the walls are products of the Wolrang and the Meow planted the seeds in the indoor garden."

Galen explained the office like he was a real estate salesman.

'I honestly wasn't very enthusiastic.....'

Ark scratched his head and looked around the office. He had been reserved about it but once completed, he actually quite liked it. The office had various influences on development which Ark hadn't expected. Of course, it only applied if Ark stayed in the office but if he concentrated then he could accelerate the growth rate of his territory. But what caught Ark's heart weren't the bonuses applied but

the balcony. Since the balcony was on the 4th floor of the Town Hall, it had a panoramic view of Lancel village.

‘Somehow it lifts my mood.’

Thanks to the new town plan the buildings and roads were neatly arranged. A wide fence surrounded the village with fields spreading out from it. Lancel village wasn’t simply a landscape to Ark anymore.

‘Lancel is my territory so I can change it as I wish.’

“Can we clear the plains on the right side of the village to create a potato field?”

When Ark said such things, the residents immediately moved and the plains were cleared. And it was possible to confirm the changes instantly through the numerical values.

-The residents have reclaimed the plains and your territory has expanded.

* The villagers are joyful about the successful reclamation (Residents’ Bond +70)

* The successfully reclaimed plains had improved the food situation (For 4 months food +1,200)

Closing Statement: Clearing of plains used 2,750 gold. Additionally, the maintenance fee of 150 every 1 month is taken from the public funds to pay the farmers. There may also be additional expenses when a disaster happens such as blight, pests or drought. The appropriate budget setting was needed.

Of course, he was previously the Lord of Silvana but he had always intended to sell it to Raiden so he didn’t really care. But when it was his estate then it became quite fascinating. What was needed to develop a balanced territory? Even if he left Galen to manage the village, Ark still needed to make decisions as the Lord. Still, he couldn’t excessively develop the territory. Clearing plains and creating new roads all required money. Therefore the development should be steady and properly managed. If

he created new roads then cleaners and repairmen were required to maintain it, so he had to be careful not to let the residents' dissatisfaction pile up. Creating new fields also required hiring farmers as well as crops. Therefore he needed an appropriate grasp of the budget as well as figuring out the abilities of the residents before starting some investments.

'In the beginning they didn't have a grasp on a system.....'

In fact, the old Lancel village usually had 30~40% of residents with free time. Sometimes 3~4 people worked in fields that required 10 people, and other times 10 people worked in fields which required 5~6 people so the progress speed was quite slow. Now thanks to Ark, Lancel village had developed a new system.

'Isn't the Lordship quite fascinating now that I have an interest in it?'

Didn't it feel like the famous simulation games 'Sim City' or the 'Tycoon' series? No, it was a virtual reality therefore the sense of accomplishment couldn't be compared to those classic games. Although he couldn't sleep well for four days, developing the village and increase the residents' bond and loyalty was interesting enough that he forgot about sleep. Of course, he had to decide on the budget and work personnel first but if the results were good then he could feel a sense of accomplishment. Ark suddenly looked at a building that occupied a corner of the village. During the past few days he spent in the village, he realized that the NPCs in Lancel village also had a wide variety of personalities just like in reality.

'Eh? That building?'

A few days ago during the evening, he had been standing on the balcony of the Town Hall's 3rd floor when he detected some strange movements from that corner. On one corner of Lancel village was a shabby building. However this building had always been locked. Therefore he felt suspicious when he first discovered the building but he eventually forgot about it. If he hadn't been standing on the balcony at that time then he wouldn't have noticed the suspicious group of people gathered around the building.

'I had forgotten about that building. I wonder who lives there? And why are there people around it at this hour?'

Something was happening in Ark's territory! Ark was intrigued by this and moved to the area before using Stealth. He held his breath for a while and searched the surrounding people. They were all dressed like merchants but he couldn't remember their faces. In other words, they must be peddlers travelling from other areas.

"Is it time?"

The merchants in front of the building checked their time pieces and muttered.

'Time? What are they waiting for?'

Ark wondered as he tilted his head to one side. Then there was the sound of the door being unlocked and it opened. And the people that appeared from inside.....

'Eh? Aren't they the raccoons?'

That's right. The one who opened the door was from the raccoon clan.

"Were you undiscovered by others?"

The raccoons restlessly looked around and said. The merchants gathered in the area smiled and nodded.

"Huhuhu, yes. You don' have to worry."

"Okay, come in."

'Why on earth are the peddlers and raccoons meeting together like this? Judging from their actions it doesn't seem to be the first time..... Hmmm. Well, I'll know once I enter.'

Ark who was hidden with 'Stealth' entered the building with the merchants. The building had blackout curtains so it would be dark even with the sun out. But the raccoons soon lit up several lamps. Ark instantly became perplexed.

'Eh? What the, this is.....?'

Surprisingly there were a large number of japtem piled up in the building. The merchants' eyes sparkled as the light showed the form of the japtem.

"Hmm, the items are quite okay this time?"

"Huhuhu, of course. After all we are the ones who made them. It is in a different class from the sloppy goods created by humans."

The raccoons replied with a prideful expression.

"The price is the same as before?"

"No, this time it has increased by 5%."

"What?"

"Look, as a merchant it should be obvious. It is better quality than the previous goods you bought. If we should it elsewhere then we would receive at least 5~6% more."

"Well, I guess but....."

"These items aren't easy to get. If I don't get any profit from it then it will be useless."

“But it will be unfair if you’re the only one who leaves with a profit. Honestly, it isn’t easy for merchants like us to meet like this. Shouldn’t we divide the profit among ourselves in order to cement our bond? 3 percent.”

“Sheesh, as expected from merchants. I understand. You have to get rid of these things quickly. But just to be clear. You shouldn’t dispose of anything bought from me nearby. This has to keep being a secret.”

“Huhuhu, is this our first time? We want to trade with you for a long time so don’t worry.”

‘Eh? These guys?’

After listening to the conversation between the raccoons and the merchants, it was possible for Ark to guess the situation. They gathered in this building during the evening in order to do black market dealings. It was unnecessary to explain but when buying or selling things through the store, a certain amount of tax was included. That subsequently became the income of the village and the Lord. But these types of black market dealings didn’t require a tax. Additionally, it wasn’t required to pay the market price for the goods. As a result, you could purchase the same goods for 30~40% cheaper than in the stores. Of course, selling it through the black market also gave benefits to the raccoons.

‘But to do black market dealings in my territory!’

He never even imagined it! Anyway, now he couldn’t wait and see anymore. One of the main sources of income for Lancel village was the tax. But now precious goods were being traded in black market dealings. While it didn’t compare to the amount that the raccoons normally produced, he couldn’t condone it as the Lord. Ark was able to drop Stealth and reveal his presence when he realized something.

‘Wait? Right now I can seize everything and lock the merchants in jail. But.....’

Ark thought for a while and sneaked out of the building. Then he visited the Seutandal branch and spoke to no. 358.

"I have a request. In the future, please keep an eye on that building every night. If merchants enter the building then please sneak in using Stealth and record the prices of the goods traded there. Of course, please keep this a secret from everyone."

"Huh? What.....?"

"I'll tell you the details later. If it works out well then I'll compensate you generously."

"I understand. If it is a favour from Ark-nim....."

'Huhuhu, all of the money from the black market will be mine!'

A wicked smile spread on Ark's face as no. 358 nodded. There was a reason why Ark hadn't dismantled it right there. If the products were sold normally through the raccoons' workshop then Lancel would only get a profit from the taxes. It was 5% of the listed price. But how much could he get with the black market profit? In the future the raccoons would continue to sell things through the black market. And it was clear that the raccoons would collect the money from the dealings. If he stopped the black market at an appropriate time then he could seize all of that money.

'If I intimidate the raccoons then I will be able to put that money into my own pocket instead of the estate's. In other words, he could embezzle the income of the raccoons. Huhuhu, then I can obtain the profits from the raccoons' black market dealings!'

That was Ark's true purpose. Ark even made a wall which hid the building where the black market occurred. If the black market was safer than it would become more active. And he would leave it until the appropriate time.

'But I never would've guessed if I hadn't seen it. I had been thinking that the NPCs just lived without thinking. If they have no jobs and complaints pile up then they will also turn to illegal acts, just like users.'

The management of his territory was starting to feel more interesting than before. It was to the extent that he wanted to forget about other stuff and just focus on Lancel's management.

‘But my real work starts today.’

Ark who had been locked in recollections while looking at his territory closed his eyes. When he opened them, Ark’s eyes weren’t that of the Lord anymore.

“Have you prepared what I requested?”

“Yes, it’s been prepared in cash like you asked.”

Galen nodded and laid a bag of money on the table. It was five 2,000 gold bags and one 1,000 gold bag which added up to 11,000 gold! Ark received that money for putting 4% of his 9% shares as collateral for a loan. When Ark had become the Lord it was worth 10,600 gold but by the 4th day the market price had risen by 400 gold.

‘In just four days 265 gold for 0.1% became 275 gold. Since some fields have been cleared, a new road is in progress and the buildings for the 3 guilds will soon be completed, the market price will continue to rise.’

If he had waited a bit more then he might’ve been able to borrow 1,000 more gold for the 4% shares. But Ark couldn’t afford to wait that long. In addition, he had to pay an interest of 3% every 15 days so it wasn’t good to borrow that much.

“Now I will leave Lancel to Galen ajusshi for a while.”

“Don’t worry. I will complete the work you’ve assigned perfectly.”

“Please contact me by mail if there are any problems.”

“I understand.”

Then Galen lowered his head and suddenly grasped Ark’s hand.

“I know why Lord-nim needed to borrow the money. And I have no doubt that you will accomplish your purpose. Yet if you fail then don’t take it personally. Lord-nim already has Lancel as a territory.”

Ark looked at Galen before laughing and replying.

“I know.”

Ark was also aware of this. Even if he failed and lost, Lancel would still be Ark’s territory. He had poured all his passion into Lancel during the last four days. But there was no meaning in failing!

‘From now on I have to concentrate all my nerves on retaking Silvana!’

Ark had a determined expression on his face as he exited the Town Hall. That’s right. It was the reason why Ark used his shares as collateral to borrow money. It was to secure war funds to recapture Silvana.

‘Galen told me not to worry if I fail to recapture Silvana but..... No! I still have Lancel left after failing but that is no guarantee. And the chance to recapture Silvana won’t come again. My dream for the last 2 years will fail with a single defeat.’

Ark’s heart started pounding at the thought. He had gone through so many hardships in New World. It was probably 3~4 times more than normal users experienced. Sometimes he suffered tremendous damage and if the crisis wasn’t overcome then he would be forced to quit the game. However, Ark had overcome those crises and ended up gaining more money and levels than other users. In other words, a crisis provided him opportunities to grow. A crisis was a chance! That was now Ark’s philosophy in life. But Ark didn’t think it was that simple this time.

“Heavy.....this is the first time the gold feels so heavy.....”

Ark had prepared 18,435 gold! Using his special privilege, he received a loan of 11,000 gold! In total it was 29,435 gold! When converting to cash, it was close to 300 million won! It was Ark’s entire fortune which he had gathered after 2 years of conquering crises. Although it was impossible to feel the weight of the gold in the bag, for the first time in 2 years his bag strap weighed down his shoulder.

‘If possible, I don’t want to make such a risky gamble.’

To be honest, Ark would like to protect the 30,000 gold that he gathered and continue his adventures. But after the Lancel defensive war it became certain that he couldn’t coexist with the Hermes alliance. If he left the Hermes alliance alone then it was just like leaving a ticking bomb in his warehouse.

“.....I have no choice. There is no turning back now!”

Ark muttered like he was reciting a spell. It was a spell to change his anxiety to courage.

It was originally set in the suburbs but thanks to the new town plan, Ark’s store was now in the centre of the village so it was thriving. In particular, after gathering the 3 guilds a lot more users had been attracted and gathered around his store. But it would be a problem if he couldn’t see any goods to the customers. In order to raise the required war funds, Ark had sold most of the goods in his warehouse. He also didn’t have the money to buy new products right now. But they were Ark’s long-awaited customers so he couldn’t just let them leave. After his stock had disappeared, Ark borrowed from other stores and was carrying out a sale. Of course, they were goods borrowed from other stores so he would only receive a 2~3% profit. But in this situation the profit wasn’t an important issue.

‘Even if I fill the store up later, I won’t be able to bring back guests that I lost. The profit margin doesn’t matter as long as the store is still operating.’

Thanks to that Ark’s store was still crowded with people even while having no stock. No, instead the goods diversified even more and the customer satisfaction increased. Ark had also settled the other NPC stores’ dissatisfaction at having customers monopolized by Ark’s store.

‘Thankfully Sapjil and Ulmeok are the ones who have to move all the goods..... I also give them a monthly salary. I’ll just have to be forced to let the monthly salaries pile up.’

At the sight of Ark’s smirk, Sapjil and Ulmeok felt like crying. Once again, it was impossible for them to be freed from Ark. His summons were no exception. While Ark was staying in Lancel, his summons

Razak, Radun and Racard were put to work. But the most surprising thing was that his summons were unexpectedly talented at business.

“Now, now, come. Come in. Take your pick, your pick! We have everything!”

Clack clack clack, ttadadak!

Ssak ssak ssak ssak, ssak ssak ssak ssak!

Racard who was wearing big glasses and a hat clapped and attracted the users’ attention. Razak also helped using his shield while Radun spat up items and juggled them. There was a reason his pets were engaging in business in eagerly.

“You make us fight and now you’re even making us engage in business? We also want a short break sometimes. I’ve never heard of a pet selling things. Master is so mean!”

Racard’s complaints piled up as the Lancel defensive war ended and he was shoved into the store. While he could beat them up, he now that wouldn’t successfully motivate their labour. After worrying for a bit, Ark offered a suggestion to his summons. Instead of paying salaries, they would earn points based on their performance.

Points Method

10~100 points: x1 snack food can be eaten (points required depends on ingredients and price)

100~200 points: A mistake made in battle will be waived (the required points depend on the mistake).

100~400 points: Winter equipment provision (points required depends on quality).

* 1 point earned for the sale of 1 item. Can be used at any time

. "P-points?"

Racard froze after hearing about the points from Ark. Since they had to eat so much food for growth, the pets were sick of it but sometimes they also craved junk food. But it was impossible for Ark to give away the ingredients he collected. So his pets became frustrated by not being able to eat junk food. Furthermore, his pets were most afraid of failing in battle and receiving a penalty. However, if they collected points then it was possible to eat the junk food or avoid the penalty! But that wasn't his pets' final goal. If they collected 100 points then it was possible to receive winter equipment. During the last winter, they didn't even have a pair of gloves so it was normal for his pets to tremble. Right now it was late fall but winter was coming, and knowing Ark's nature it was obvious he wouldn't buy them any gloves. Yet if they collected points then they would be able to request winter equipment! So his pets' sales pitches heated up as they started a painful struggle for survival.

'Huhuhu, yes if they want to scramble to collect 100 points then they won't dare betray me. And all I have to do is buy one or two gloves. Furthermore, if I didn't do this then wouldn't they keep on complaining about clothes during the winter? Well, it means I can utilize my pets as shop assistants.'

Ark smirked and went up to the 2nd floor.

"Have you put everything regarding the Lordship in order?"

When he entered the 2nd floor, Roco greeted him like he was a husband returning.

"Yes, to some degree."

".....Now shall we begin already?"

Then an excited voice was heard from behind Ark. Ark looked back to see that Bread was climbing up the stairs behind him. However Bread seemed somewhat strange. His whole body was covered in dust like he had been rolling around on the ground and he seemed to give off a sense of weariness. It was because of Ark that Bread was in such a state. In fact, Ark had struggled with one problem when he became determined to retake Silvana. It was that the beast clans and ex-thieves from Lancel would have to enter the war. Currently he could mobilize 300 people from Lancel. That was half of Lancel's population. If they died then Lancel's population would decrease by that much. Ark honestly didn't want

them to participate in the war. In a situation where the troops numbered several thousand, 300 people weren't a big number. Although they were only 300 people, the beast clans had special abilities that could be used strategically. Ark was betting everything on this battle. He feared sacrificing the NPCs but he needed them in his troops. Anyway, if he was defeated in this battle then wouldn't Lancel be attacked by the Hermes alliance's retaliatory strike? In addition, the NPCs were eager to get revenge on the Hermes alliance that was the source behind Lancel being attacked. So Ark decided to address the troops from Lancel.

"This expedition is more important than ever and it will be a fierce battle. Whether I win or fail, the damage received won't be small. Because of my selfishness, I honestly don't want the residents of Lancel to enter the war. But it is true that I need your help. Thus I decided to do this. You will undergo severe training and if I judge that you have sufficient power then you can participate in the war."

Since then the troops had gone around various hunting grounds and dungeons in the Argus Mountains and started their combat training. And their training instructor for 4 days was Bread.

"How is it? Was there any progress?"

"Obviously. Who am I?"

Bread laughed as he sat down in a chair.

"I can't confirm it directly since I can't see the NPCs' information window, but everyone seemed to have gained 5 levels. The Wolrang and Meow were originally a combat species so their power didn't rise that much, but the ex-thieves who changed to guards has gained a lot in a short time. I can't assure you. It won't be easy if they go against the users."

In fact, Ark wasn't that worried about the beast clans' combat power. The Wolrang and the Meow possessed general strength and agility equivalent to the users. During the siege of Silvana, there was a 50 level difference between the users and the Meow but their amazing agility overwhelmed during a 1-on-1 combat. Ark was worried more about the ex-thieves than the beasts. But if the more experienced Bread was full of confidence then they should've reached a minimum level.

'No matter their level, the raccoons can be strategically used.....'

The core of the Lancel troops was the raccoons. Their cannons had more range and damage than arrows, not to mention their abilities to dig tunnels, repair buildings and heavy equipment. These characteristics could be used strategically.

‘Although I couldn’t use it in the Lancel defensive war, the raccoons’ secret weapon that they’ve been preparing is ready! Their firepower absolutely won’t be lacking!’

It was the ultimate weapon in which Ark had invested considerable funds! The reason Ark had been in Lancel for 4 days was because he had been waiting for the completion of the weapon being secretly developed. That’s right. The raccoons had a secret research laboratory underneath Lancel. The research was spurred even more after Ark became the Lord and the secret weapon was finally completed yesterday.

‘This means I’ve finished all the preparations in Lancel. Together with the weapons, the number of troops from Lancel number 270 beasts and guards. Only 30 of the guards are staying behind to protect Lancel.....’

The guard divisions from the three guilds were already present in the village so he didn’t have to worry about Lancel’s defense. Ark tapped the table and began to talk.

“Now, let me sum up the situation. There are 270 Lancel troops. Shambala has gathered 1,300 people from the Eastern Nation and Seutandal. There are also 700 applicants from the users in Seutandal. And Redian has managed to gather 1,000 people from Bristania.”

“So there are a total of 3,270 troops?”

Bread nodded and then muttered like he was thinking out loud.

“The Hermes alliance is expected to have at least 5,000 troops. There is a difference of 1,500 people between us. Will we be gathering more troops before moving to Nagaran?”

“Yes.”

“So? How many more will we gather?”

“1,000 more people.”

Bread thought for a moment before giving a heavy sigh. In fact, there was a reason Ark had to rush to retake Silvana. Jewel’s face had been shown to the public on TV. Of course, Jewel had withdrawn from Hermes in advance and they had officially denied the alliance’s relationship with Jewel through the forums of various sites. However 100% of Jewel’s group used to be in Hermes, not just 1~2 people. NPCs wouldn’t know but the users couldn’t obediently accept Hermes’ claim. Shortly after the broadcast of the Lancel defensive war, the Hermes alliance had been extremely criticized by the users. On the other hand Ark, no Dark Wolf was a hero! With such an atmosphere, couldn’t Ark gather users to attack Hermes? Whether in reality or the game, people gravitated towards those with a cause. If he took advantage of the current atmosphere towards Hermes then he could attract high level users.

‘On the other hand, the morale of the Hermes alliance would’ve fallen.’

The morale of the troops in the game was important. No, morale was important to win in the game. If their morale fell in the game, their eagerness to fight would decrease and they would die. Thus the battle was in his favour if the morale was already decreased from the beginning. However, there was no guarantee that the atmosphere would continue forever. If time passed then that atmosphere would disappear. This was the reason why Ark thought it was the proper time to recapture Silvana. As he mentioned earlier, it wasn’t a problem collecting reinforcements. The problem wasn’t gathering reinforcements but maintaining them. Ark had a good reason. Many users might support Ark. But there were problems if they wanted to participate in the battle. If they participated in the battle then they needed money for consumables and repairs. If they didn’t belong to a guild or alliance then there were no benefits for users to participate in a siege. So they had to receive some money for the damages they might incur during the battle. In other words, Ark had to bear the cost for things such as equipment repairs, food and various supplies. The minimum cost for one person was 10 gold. Hiring level 250 users required at least 10 gold. However Ark had already collected 1,700 users. If he collected 1,000 more then he would have 2,700 users. 10 gold per person meant 27,000 gold. The thousands of people needed in a siege was no joke.

‘I’ve prepared 30,000 gold for the war funds!’

It was an enormous amount but it wasn’t enough to hire thousands of troops. Since Ark had no guild or alliance, he had to bear that cost alone.

“But it has to be enough. It is now or never.”

Ark replied in a firm voice. The reason Ark was able to think that was because of the siege rules. After Ark revealed Alan’s use of the ghost guild, the rules of the siege had changed. Since Sid was currently infiltrating Silvana, Ark was able to hear the new siege rules from him.

“The system now is that guilds at the Shrine of War have a sequential chance to challenge a siege. Since the siege is more large scale than before, it will only occur once every 2 weeks so some people will have to wait months for a chance.”

“Then if a guild registers later then they’ll have to wait?”

“Not really. At the Shrine of War, the guilds can apply for a 100 vs 100 battle separate from the siege. The guild that wins will have their priority increased.

This was the new rules of the siege. Even if Ark collected the troops, if he didn’t have the priority right then he couldn’t participate in the siege. Of course, he could participate in a few battles against guilds but if there were a lot of guilds with higher priority than him then it would eat a lot of his funds. His funds were very tight so there was no possibility of doing that. But he didn’t have to wait this time.

“The rules right now..... In fact, recently there haven’t been a lot of sieges. Since the size of the alliance in Nagaran had become larger and their troops numbered in the thousands, few people were willing to attack them. If they tried a siege and failed then the guild would become incredibly broke so there was none that would try it.”

The Hermes alliance was one of the 5 powers in Nagaran. They were a huge alliance with more than 5,000 people so trying a siege with them would just make them lose the funds. Because of that, there had been no sieges in Silvana for half a year.

‘But in fact, the Hermes alliance is actually struggling financially. If the other influential alliances know this information then they will apply for a siege. No matter how much Hermes tries to hide the information, one day it will leak.’

If someone showed a weak point in Nagaran then it was the end. When the circumstances inside the Hermes alliance were revealed then the other unions would attack Silvana like hyenas.

'If Silvana is taken away from the Hermes alliance then I will have to fight a new union. Furthermore, they might even collect the remnants of the Hermes alliance. Ark only just had the minimum funds.

It was why he had to recapture Silvana now, even if it meant borrowing money.

"Then there is no other choice? Okay, it's decided so I'll depart right away for Silvana. I'll bring the gathered troops to Silvana."

Bread shrugged and muttered. The person giddy about the upcoming battle wasn't just Bread.

"I'll also do my best to help you."

Roco was also looking forward to going onto the battlefield with Ark. Then Sapjil who was moving goods on the 2nd floor gasped and looked aghast.

"Eek? Even Manager-nim is going?"

"Of course. Why else have I been taking lessons from Melody?"

"But who will look after the store?"

"You guys will have to do that."

"Huh? But....."

Sapjil spoke in a worried voice.

'Ah, that's something I hadn't thought of.'

Ark finally realized a problem he hadn't considered. Even without Roco, there was still Sapjil and Ulmeok left to look after the store. But he felt anxious at the thought of leaving the store to those two. After a lot of education they had become steadier than before, but there was no guarantee that would continue without Roco there. No, Ark's store was open 24 hours like a convenience store so he couldn't possibly trust in the two of them.

'But Roco's abilities will play an important role in this battle.'

Ark's recognition of Roco's skills had changed 180 degrees after the Lancel defensive war. Not only did Illusion Sonata have fantastic strategic value, Roco's buffs could also be stacked onto hundreds of users. With both Lariette and Roco as rear support, the power of the buffs applied would be huge.

'Should I leave the store to Sid during the siege?'

Ark considered this. Then Sid jumped with surprise after he talked about it with him.

"What are you saying? Do you think I'm a person without any work to do? I'm a very busy person. As the manager of the foreign division of the Continental Commerce Firm, how can I be seen in a suburban store like this?"

"S-suburban?"

"You should forget about the idea. I helped you with persuading the merchants' guild but that is it. You should restrain from asking anything more from me at the moment. Because I am someone who also has a lot of work. I can't just keep taking care of Ark-nim's problems. Well, that might change if Ark-nim pays me."

Sid snorted and muttered. Ark's face became blank from Sid's reaction. In the past he couldn't even yawn without Sid flinching. However, Sid's insubordination was long scheduled. Now Sid had fully occupied a place in Nagaran. As the foreign division manager of the Continental Commerce Firm which had a great deal of large trades, he had already changed to his 2nd profession. And he collected a huge amount of money. Now Sid no longer needed to flatter Ark anymore.

‘..... So his head has become really big?’

Ark glared at the cheeky hobbit. But Sid had been capture during his weak point so he was different from the three pigs who had been tamed with violence. He couldn’t squeeze Sid like he could the three pig brothers. Furthermore, Sid could also expose some of his internal affairs to the Hermes alliance. If Sid disclosed the circumstances to the Hermes alliance then Ark would be in trouble. Although Sid knew Ark’s character, he had gained confidence recently after realizing how important he was to Ark. Therefore he had no intention of staying at Ark’s store. Ark felt furious at the thought.

‘Unbelievable. Now he is being rebellious? I have to use some excuse in the future to re-educate him. But I can’t pay attention to Sid now. There are bigger problems so I have no choice but to move on. But who can I trust the store to if Sid won’t stay?’

Ark was sighing with frustration when it happened.

“That..... President-nim, there is a visitor for you.”

Ulmeok suddenly appeared on the stairs and spoke.

“Visitor? Who?”

“It is the first time I’ve seen them.....”

Ulmeok answered in a hesitant tone. In the past, Ulmeok wouldn’t have reported the guest to Roco or Ark. But after being caught by Isyuram, he now sought Ark and Roco out to report straight away.

‘Who could be looking for me?’

Ark scratched his head and descended to the 1st floor. When he went down a teenage girl wearing robes was looking around the store. Ark looked at the girl and tilted his head to one side. It was the first time he had seen the girl. Nevertheless, he couldn’t help feeling like the girl was somewhat familiar. It

was definitely the first time he saw her but what was this feeling? What on earth? At that moment, the girl seemed to feel his gaze and turned her head. And she stared at Ark before laughing.

“Ah, I can tell with just one glance. You’re Hyun-woo. No, are you called Ark here?”

Ark was even more confused by the girl’s words. Hyun-woo? Ark? Didn’t that mean the person knew who he was in reality as well as the game? Furthermore, it wasn’t possible to change genders in New World so the person was definitely a woman. However, the only females Ark knew in reality were Roco and Lariette.

“Excuse me..... Who are you?”

The girl became puzzled by Ark’s question. But then she seemed to have realized something and laughed mischievously.

“Let’s see? Who am I?”

“I don’t feel like playing with you.”

“You’re not friendly at all.”

The girl pouted at Ark’s blunt words.

“Oppa who is it?”

Roco had descended and looked at the girl with curiosity. The girl blinked several times before her smile widened.

“Oh, are you Hye-sun? Hohoho, now I know why Hyun-woo plays the game so much. How interesting. This is good.”

“W-who.... Eh?”

Roco stared at the girl before her eyes suddenly widened. Then she ran like a squirrel and embraced the girl. Ark was even more confused by Roco’s reaction. Then the girl looked at Ark and sighed.

“My daughter in law is 100 times better than my child.”

Ark instantaneously felt like cold water had been poured on him. A cry escaped from Ark’s mouth.

“Eek? It can’t be, Mother?”

“Who am I if not your mother?”

The teenage girl swelled like a balloon and retorted.