

Ark Vol 19 C 2

Chapter 2

ACT 2 Gathering in Nagaran

“Mother, what’s with that face?”

Ark grumbled as he gave So-mi a strange glance. That’s right. The female inside the shop was So-mi, Ark’s mother. By the way, it was because of that face that Ark committed the sin of not recognizing his mother. When his mother had used New World’s character creation process, she had transformed into a teenage girl.

“Looking young and pretty is never wrong.”

..... That was his mother’s answer.

“Then you managed to manipulate the game’s character creation process.”

“Was it difficult? Don’t you just have to scan an old photo when the message appeared? Scanner? At any rate, when I scanned the photo my character was programmed automatically. Wait? After thinking about it, my feelings are a little hurt. Even if my face de-aged 25 years, how can my son not recognize me? Mother is sad. Even Roco recognized me.”

“I previously saw the album with Mother in it. You looked so pretty that I had to remember.”

“Oh, Roco is also pretty.”

So-mi stroked her head and Roco acted like a ca.t. Ark had also thought that So-mi’s face was slightly familiar. But how could he remember it from a photo in an old album shoved into the closet?

“I don’t know. Mother just looks like a high school student. It is like a scam.”

Ark pouted while murmuring. However, So-mi ignored it and turned around.

“Who are the people with you? Your friends?”

“Oh, you are Ark’s mother? My name is Bread.”

Bread laughed boldly and approached.

“It must be tough for a beauty like you to raise a monster like Ark.”

“Your fool, this is from a 25 year old photo.”

“Hmm, this guy is still naive. I don’t want to hear such lousy words. Despite it being 25 years ago, the features can still clearly be seen.”

“You’re a good friend. You are called Bread? Please continue spending time with Ark in the future. Despite him being older, that child still doesn’t know things like that.”

“Hohoho, I’ll teach him.”

Bread laughed and hit his chest. Ark sent him a sour look but the atmosphere had become more harmonious because of Bread. But Sapjil and Ulmeok’s faces had fallen. There was a reason for their expressions. They hadn’t had good experiences with the people associated with Ark. Sapjil still had the memory of being beaten by Isyuram, JusticeMan and the rehabilitation members. Unlike her outer appearance, Roco also had a personality of steel. Therefore in their heads, ‘acquaintances of Ark= dangerous people.’

‘The person who appeared this time is Ark’s mother. Despite being a woman, I can’t be reassured. Wasn’t she the one who created Ark’s personality? If she gets mad and shows her true personality then she might be much scarier than Ark. It would be nice to have a break from swollen eyes.’

Thus the two of them hid in a corner, not even daring to breathe loudly. While they were trembling, Roco suddenly remembered something and asked So-mi.

“But Mother, wasn’t there something you want to give to me a while ago?”

“Ah, that’s right.”

So-mi then took something out of her bag.

“Winter is coming soon. It is interesting that we can even feel the coldness of winter in a game. Hohoho, at first I thought the room was cold and even checked the temperature of the boiler. But it was on its original settings. So I thought of you guys and prepared this. I actually came here because I wanted to give this to you directly.”

The things which emerged from So-mi’s bag were gloves and scarves. But the gloves and scarves were different from the ones found in general stores. The overall shape was similar but the gloves and scarves had flashy patterns on them. When Ark received it, an information window popped up.

-Wool Gloves (4th class product, Deluxe)

Armour type: Gloves (Clothing)

Defense: –

Durability: 40 /40

Weight: 3

User Restriction: –

Gloves made using high quality wool. The gloves are a relatively plain style but it is possible to feel the skill of the craftsman through the simple needlework and neat finish. The particularly noteworthy part is the hand stitched embroidery on the back of the gloves. The precise pattern of the eagle flying will give courage and compassion to the users.

-Wool Scarf (4th class product, Deluxe)

Armour type: Scarf (Clothing)

Defense: –

Durability: 40 /40

Weight: 4

User Restriction: –

With the ability to wear it as a hood or a scarf, it is a stylish scarf made of wool. The part which goes around the neck is so fluffy and warm that it is possible to feel the meticulous care the creator put into it. In addition, the small eagle design on the end enhances the style. The eagle embroidery is so close to perfect that the person can wear the scarf with pride and courage.

‘Huk, what is this?’

Ark’s eyes popped out at the information window. The gloves and scarf Ark received had a 4th class ranking. In addition, the sewing option only appeared when the sewing skill reached intermediate. She had only started the game yet So-mi’s sewing skill had already reached intermediate? That was not the

only surprise. Gloves and scarves were naturally cold resistant. That was why users bought them during winter. Style was also an option attached to clothing. However the numerical values this time were no joke. Originally the gloves and scarves had an average cold resistance of 15%. But these ones had 30~40%? The cause of this was due to the S rank completion rate. In fact, sewing was a general purpose skill since it was easier to learn than the special production skills like alchemy. It also had a low failure rate. If created roughly than a completion rate of B would come out. But this part which made this skill special was the fact that it was extremely difficult to get a completion rate above A. In order for users to reach a higher proficiency, they needed to create 100 items with an A rank completion so most of them gave up at the advanced level. Yet this wasn't an A rank product but an S rank!

'Hasn't my mother only been playing the game for 3 months? Furthermore, what is this embroidery option? I've never seen anything like it.'

The eagle embroidered on the gloves and scarf was marvellous. He had seen clothing dyed different patterns but this was the first time he had seen directly embroidered clothing. And it was also the first time he saw an additional option attached to clothing. No, he hadn't even imagined it until he saw it. And the additional option added 20~30 courage!

"Do you like it? I've checked it several times but this is the embroidery option that people like the most."

So-mi spoke casually. But it wasn't something that could be spoken about that casually. It was natural for users to like the courage option. Not only did courage increase resistance to states like 'fear,' it also increase damage and attack speed. So the stat was similar to a joker type which could affect different abilities. However, finding courage attached to clothing was extremely rare! Yet So-mi had no idea how big it was that she attached it to gloves and scarves.

"It's strange, when I embroider the eagle design I fail one in every three attempts."

'Oh my god, then she has a 60% chance of attaching this option?'

If other tailors heard So-mi say that so casually then they would've been overcome with depression. However, there was another reason Ark was baffled.

"Uh, Mother, this is.....!"

Roco's eyes shone like a lantern at the unexpected gift. It was an S rank luxury item so of course Roco liked it. The problem was the design of the gloves and scarf! Ark had received blue clothing with red embroidery. Meanwhile Roco's items were red with blue embroidery. That's right. Ark and Roco had received a couple set consisting of gloves and scarves.

"Two people who get along should wear things like this. Oh, is it not in style these days? You don't like it?"

"D-d-don't like it? Wah, thank you Mother!"

Roco embraced So-mi tightly while trembling. Ark was inwardly uncomfortable but he couldn't express that. No, these were presents that his mother put effort into making so he couldn't find fault with them.

'Isn't this a pair of gloves and a scarf created by Mother?'

Ark remembered the times in the past when So-mi created a sweater and a scarf for him. When did it stop? It was probably when the sweater and scarves that had a price tag started to look better and cooler than his mother's. And when did his mother start buying it from the department store instead of making it for him? How did his mother feel then? He felt a strange feeling in his chest as he looked at the gloves and scarf.

'And seeing Mother acting like a normal person.....'

When So-mi first started the game, she couldn't even walk but now she had managed to ride a horse to Lancel. After arriving at the store, she had acted like a healthy person. Although it was in a game, seeing So-mi walk around casually caused unspeakable emotions inside him. In fact, his mother didn't talk about the game with him. It was probably because she wanted to surprise him with this visit.

"Ah, that's right!"

Then So-mi seemed to remember something and reached back into her bag.

"Actually I've also packed things for other people."

“Other people?”

“Yes, for Detective Gwon and the other rehabilitation members. And these are for your pets. Since they are children you frequently talk about. Give these to the children. I’ve heard about their sizes from Roco so it should fit.”

“You even made some for my summons?”

Ark looked on with amazement as countless wool clothes emerged. For JusticeMan and the rehabilitation members, she had prepared 11 sets of gloves and scarves. There were also gloves and scarves for Racard, Razak and Radun. So-mi also knew that Radun had different forms.

‘It’s worked out well. If my summons collect enough points then I can just give them this.’

That was Ark’s though as So-mi also gave some gloves and scarves to Bread and Sid.

“I didn’t know you two were here so they aren’t personalized to you.”

“Eh? We also get some?”

“Please continue getting along with Ark in the future.”

“Thank you!”

“Ohh, absolutely thank you!”

Bread and Sid cheered as they also received gloves and scarves. Meanwhile, Sapjil and Ulmeok who were in the corner continuously sent So-mi envious looks.

“What are you doing? I also have some for you two.”

“Huh? F-for us?”

“I asked Roco. Didn’t you two support Ark a lot in the store? You’re Sapjil and Ulmeok aren’t you? I’ve prepared things for you as well.”

“Mother, you don’t have to bother giving those guys anything.”

Ark murmured in a testy tone. Even though the clothes were classified as low price items, it was already late fall. It was the season where gloves and scarves were popular. With these types of options, he could receive 5 gold from them. Aside from JusticeMan and the rehabilitation members, he thought it was fair that such expensive items were given to Bread and Sid for free. But he had to say something when those guys who received a monthly salary were about to receive some. Then So-mi frowned and said.

“Why are you acting so mean? A person shouldn’t act like that. Aren’t they people as well? You should treat the people close to you better.”

So-mi then sighed and spoke in a soft voice towards Sapjil and Ulmeok.

“Don’t mind him. I’ll apologize instead.”

“.....!”

Sapjil and Ulmeok’s eyes widened. Roco, JusticeMan, Isyuram, the rehabilitation members, even Bread and Redian..... All the people surrounding Ark had bad personalities. But So-mi was different. She treated them like humans! Not only was she a pretty girl, despite actually being 25 years older, but she protected the pigs and even prepared handmade gifts for them. Sapjil and Ulmeok shed tears as they received the gloves and scarves.

“Ohhhh, to give such items to us.....!”

“Thank you. Can I call you Mother?”

“No, please let us call you that!”

“Tsk tsk, your feelings seemed to have been damaged in the meantime but don’t worry. I will punish Ark severely.”

“We’ll swear allegiance to Mother!”

Sapjil and Ulmeok cried out without hesitation. Ark sent the two pigs a sour look.

“Sheesh! Those children are really playing around. How dare those pigs call her Mother?”

Then something popped into Ark’s head like lightning. If Roco left the store then it would be in a pinch without a store manager. While So-mi came to visit Ark and Roco in Lancel, she had no thought about roaming around. Then couldn’t she look after the store for a while? So-mi still lacked experience in the game but in reality she was playing in the room next to Ark’s. Her lack of experience wasn’t a problem since she could consult him anytime. Since Ark was the Lord of Lancel, having her there would be 100 times better than her being in a beginner village. Sapjil and Ulmeok immediately responded to Ark’s suggestion.

“Wow, Mother as the manager?”

“Great! Okay! Please accept it!”

So-mi thought for a while before smiling and nodding.

“Well, okay. I can also sell the things I made in the store. Sapjil, Ulmeok, please look after me well.”

“Yes!”

The pigs shouted with joy. Just like that the problem of Ark's store manager was solved. Ark explained the basic operations of the store to So-mi. Then he told her proudly that he had become the Lord of Lancel. Although So-mi didn't understand the details about the Lordship, she was satisfied as she confirmed the residents had a good impression of Ark.

"It seems you are doing well so I'm glad. Don't worry about the store and leave it to me."

Ark didn't mention that he was going to lead troops to recapture Silvana. Even if it was a game, his mother wouldn't like the thought of him going to war. Anyway, Ark solved the problem of the store manager with So-mi's appearance and headed towards the square with the group. The troops that finished Bread's hell training had already gathered at the square.

'Okay, now there are no more problems.'

Ark looked around Lancel village. He had controlled all the work he needed to do as the Lord. Ark also left the person he trusted the most in charge of the store. Of course, the most important part of gathering the necessary troops still remained but everything else was finished.

"Okay, let's go!"

Ark shouted as he rode on Radun and pointed to Nagaran. At the same time, the 1,000 troops from Bristania under the command of Redian and the 2,000 troops under Shambala's command all departed towards Seutandal. Ark's expedition to reclaim Silvana had begun!

".....?"

The old person who looked like a bull blinked his round eyes.

"W-what the, you?"

“What is it? Did you forget? Didn’t I just meet you yesterday?”

“No, that’s not it..... In just one day..... That is ridiculous!”

The old man waved his hand and shouted. The old man’s reaction was natural. The old man had numerous scars from wounds on his face. The old man was actually a retired merchant. From his appearance it was clear that he wasn’t an ordinary merchant. He would even deceive a dragon if it meant delivering his package. This old man was called Kuronil. That’s right. He was the legendary merchant who would run through dungeons, rampaging monsters or battlefields where there was a shower of arrows if it was for business. He was Kuronil. At the peak of his fame, people would say that ‘he would catch a dragon if someone gave him money.’ But that was already in the past. After becoming old, Kuronil had retired to the Hamong territory in Nagaran to reminisce on his old life. Even if he retired, he had built a manor with his money and lived without any worries but.....

Despite his brilliant life, Kuronil regretted one thing. As a young man, he had been too busy for a successor. So Kuronil started looking for a successor with experience and knowledge through the merchant’s guild. Yesterday evening, one man visited with an introduction from the merchant’s guild.

“I have to look at every candidate they send me.....”

Kuronil cried out with petulance. Kuronil was looking for a certain type of merchant for my successor. However, the person who appeared with the letter of introduction had a physique where all his ribs were apparent.

“Why did they send me someone like him? Didn’t I explain the minimum requirements to the merchant’s guild? Did this guy really meet the criteria? Sheesh, it’s obvious that there’s some mistake. But I can’t send him away as he has the letter of recommendation.....”

Kuronil muttered in an irritated voice.

“I won’t speak long words. Do you want to be my heir?”

“Yes.”

“Sheesh, you’re good at answering. Okay. The method to become my successor is easy. You just need to pass one test. There is a small cave near my house. You should find something inside the cave.”

“Eh? It is that simple?”

“Simple?”

Kuronil laughed at the man’s reaction.

‘Bah, you foolish fellow. If it is that simple then I would’ve already found a successor. I spent a great deal of money making the obstacles in that cave. So far dozens of people have tried it but they only ended up reaching halfway. Someone was stuck at the entrance for a month and cried when he came back. You will also come back crying.’

“Ahh, it is simple. Then go and see for yourself.”

Kuronil found it troublesome to explain so he just sent the man to the cave. And he deleted the man from his memory. He didn’t think the man was worth worrying about. But the man he deleted from his memory had returned again.

‘What the, this guy? He’s already given up? He must have no talent to abandon it so quickly.’

“The road to return is there.”

Kuronil didn’t even bother talking and just pointed towards the city. The man tilted his head to one side and asked with confusion.

“Huh? Does it just end like this when I pass the test?”

“Pass the test? W-what are you saying?”

“Didn’t I bring you the goods?”

“What, what the?”

Kuronil flinched and turned his head. The man flashed the item. It was a piggy bank. No, to be exact the item Kuronil stashed in the cave was the ‘Bold Golden Pigs.’ Kuronil looked at the gold pig with disbelieving eyes and grabbed the man’s collar before shouting.

“H-how did you.....? This guy, what on earth did you do?”

“I just entered the examination room and took it out?”

“You just entered and took it out? Then the tests didn’t work?”

“Tests? Did you mean the 3~4 strange wooden dolls? Well, I hit it and it broke. Ah, was I not allowed to do that?”

“It broke when you hit it?”

Kuronil couldn’t understand so he ran towards the cave. The man’s words were true. The remains of the smashed wooden dolls were scattered around the cave. The even more amazing thing was when the man rummaged through the remains of the doll.

“It’s a pretty interesting toy. It was a little short so I feel a bit regretful.....”

The man smacked his lips together with a regretful expression. Kuronil looked at the man blankly before he realized he didn’t even know his name.

“W-who are you?”

“Me? I am called Isyuram.”

The man grinned and replied. Yes, that person was Isyuram. Isyuram had received the quest after selling the stolen goods from the branch manager of the merchant's guild. The quest was to meet the legendary merchant Kuronil and become his heir. Isyuram was actually worried about completing the quest.

'Ark said it is likely to be a change profession quest so wouldn't it be really hard? If it is a merchant's profession quest then obviously it will deal with making money.....'

Isyuram was a level 300 merchant but he hadn't really engaged in business yet on his own. The fact that he managed to gain 11,028 gold as profit was just due to luck. If Isyuram had to do something like that again then the quest would be impossible. But fortunately Kuronil's test was simple clearing a dungeon.

'I'm glad it isn't to do with trading but it is impossible for a change profession quest to be simple. Does a monster live in the cave? Sheesh, that won't be good.....'

If the quest required beating a boss monster then it would be too hard. It didn't matter if Isyuram was a level 300 or 400 merchant. It wasn't even easy for him to deal with general monsters alone. But an unexpected message appeared when Isyuram entered the cave.

-You have entered the Cave of Trials

The Cave of Trials is a place where the user's abilities are tested. When a challenger enters the Cave of Trials, all stats will be set at a certain amount and skills will be blocked. All weapons and armour will also be invalidated. You will have to depend on your techniques, senses and reflexes to pass the test. There is no time limit or restrictions on the amount of attempts. But if you die during the test then the death penalty will be applied. If you give up the challenge then your lost abilities will be restored.

* Equipment dismantled, skills are blocked, the level is fixed and consumables are prohibited.

* Strength, Agility, Stamina, Intelligence, Wisdom and Luck are fixed at 100.

‘Eh? What is this?’

If other users saw that message then they would be unwilling. But after reading the information window, Isyuram cheered instead. All stats were fixed at 100 with the equipment and skills blocked. In other words, wasn't this the best conditions for Isyuram? In this condition, the only thing needed was the users' combat capabilities! And it was unnecessary to explain again but Isyuram's occupation was the captain of the police's SWAT team. His combat skills were top class!

‘I don't understand, but if the test is like this then I have confidence!’

Isyuram jumped into the Cave of Trials without any hesitation. There was no need to explain after that. When he entered the pitch black cave, 3~4 wooden dolls instantly began attacking Isyuram. If an ordinary user had entered the cave then they would be turned into a bloody rag. But the opponent was Isyuram. He had experience fighting against dozens of gangsters in the darkness. Obviously he was capable of receiving the attacks in the Cave of Trials. No matter how realistic it was, New World was still a game. Even if he was stabbed with a sword, he wouldn't really die. After experiencing real threats to his life, this degree of difficulty was only like a joke to him. No, it was even easier than when he fought against monsters with a merchant's body.

‘What the? Why do they feel so weak?’

Since Isyuram was a merchant, the monsters wouldn't receive a lot of damage even when he attacked the weak point. However, everybody who challenged the Cave of Trials was in the same state. In other words, Isyuram was able to deal as much damage as a warrior when he hit the wooden dolls. So Isyuram felt like the Cave of Trials was a lot easier than fighting monsters outside. In fact, Isyuram was totally unaware that dozens of merchants had challenged Kuronil's test. But most of them gave up when they couldn't even pass one checkpoint. To be honest, what normal user could pass the test where wooden dolls attacked in the darkness? Additionally, most users who chose a merchant had no experience in battle. So Kuronil's test was impossible for merchants. That's right. This was the reason why the quest had a difficulty of +A.

‘This is a good place to train the children.’

On the other hand, Isyuram was just thinking about the possibility of training there. It was natural. Even if it had a high level of difficulty, what SWAT team member wouldn't be able to pass the test? Thanks to that, Isyuram passed all checkpoints and even destroyed the huge robot at the final checkpoint before grabbing the golden pig.

“Honestly, this test is really difficult for a merchant!”

Kuronil exclaimed after hearing Isyuram’s explanation. Then his attitude changed 180 degrees and he grabbed Isyuram’s hands.

“I’ve really despaired of the merchant’s these days. The merchants today are mistaken. A merchant is not a weak existence. We have to be strong to defend our property from the warriors. If the merchants are stronger than the warriors then we can maintain our money. That is the way of a real merchant taught to me by my master.....”

Kuronil started a heated lecture.

‘The way of a real merchant’, ‘following in the footsteps of the senior merchants’, ‘must be prepared to do things as a merchant’, ‘future of a merchant’ and so on. He found Kuronil’s chattering more difficult than the Cave of Trials. So 30 minutes passed like that.

“..... Now do you understand?”

When Kuronil’s lecture was over, an information window appeared in front of Isyuram.

-You have received information from the retired merchant Kuronil about a ‘Battle Merchant’.

Therefore you’ve earned the right to change to the dual profession ‘Battle Merchant.’

A dual profession is like a magic warrior or archer who has two attributes at the same time. Having two attributes halves the available skills but it has endless possibilities depending on the way it is utilized. In other words, it can be a great or incompetent profession depending on how it is raised.

A ‘Battle Merchant’ has the dual properties of a fighter and merchant. Thanks to the nature of the profession, a bonus won’t be applied to any business dealings unless it involves weapons or armour.

Instead, it is possible to acquire battle skills unique to a Battle Merchant. When hunting, the penalty to power will be reduced by 50%. However, a penalty of 50% will be applied to the experience received from the trading of goods instead.

Would you like to change your profession?

“Ooh!”

Isyuram felt completely refreshed after the boring lecture. Like Ark said, it was indeed a profession change quest. And it wasn't an ordinary profession but a dual profession! Isyuram's eyes lit up at the description for Battle Merchant. His gaze focused on the part where Isyuram could learn combat skills! In fact, Isyuram had recently been worried about New World.

‘Don't the battles become harder as the level increases?’

When the level rose then everything was stronger. It was natural since this was a trick of the game publishers. Anyone who played a game had experienced it. Hunting a level 1 and level 100 was completely different. It was common sense for hunting at level 1 to be more difficult. But in fact, hunting at level 100 was the more difficult experience. That's because the monsters became stronger as the level increased. The reason why users could fight against those monsters was because they received various skills and additional stats. But Isyuram was a merchant so even if his level increased, Isyuram would obtain any additional battle skills or stats. So he felt like he was actually becoming weaker as his level increased. It was the thing he was most doubtful about.

‘But now I can learn combat skills and the penalty has decreased by 50%.....!’

Of course, the merchant's ability decreased at the same time but he had no interest in business anyway. It wasn't a problem he had to think about.

“Change! Change!”

After Isyuram changed professions, a new skills list appeared. The combat skills and merchant skills were listed separately. After being in the game for 1 year, he had finally learnt some combat skills. Isyuram was impatient to test out the new skills. Then he suddenly remembered Ark's words.

“That’s right! Isn’t Ark also coming to Nagaran? Silvana is not that far away. It is good. Testing the combat skills on users is the best. I’ll have to visit and tell him to add me to the siege. Huhuhu, just wait!”

So Isyuram ran like the wind towards Silvana.