

## Ark Vol 19 C 3

### Chapter 3

#### ACT 3 Dark Eden's Second Coming

Thump, thump, thump, thump!

Isyuram ran as quick as lightning when he finished his profession change quest. The place he was running to had 1,000 troops marching. Since there was no flag or insignias, the large variety of people was a troop of users. But there was one person full of individuality. He was a black wolf moving on a large lizard at the head of the group! That's right. It was Ark who had transformed into Dark Wolf.

"You really gathered 1,000 troops in three days....."

Bread said as he looked at Ark.

"You don't understand the circumstances."

"What don't I understand?"

Ark laughed and remembered a few days ago.

"I'm sure a lot of people already know why I came here. This is New World. Like me, everybody is enthusiastic about the game. This is a large continent where you can go around freely and live with NPCs. But now some people are trying to mess up the balance of New World. We have to win against the people who want to steal what belongs to others!"

A few days ago, Ark had transformed himself into Dark Wold and shouted towards hundreds of users in Selebrid square.

"The damage right now might be minimal but if they become stronger than the users would no doubt suffer. I can't forgive them. As a player in New World, I can't afford to let the balance break. And that is not possible without your help. Please. Please help me!"

“Waaaaahhhh!”

“Dark Wolf is finally moving!”

“Okay, I will enter the war to protect New World’s peace!”

The users gathered in the square cheered at Ark’s speech ended.

‘Huhuhu, it is a success!’

Ark looked at the supporters and laughed. But this reaction wasn’t just because of Ark’s fame. To be precise, it was the result of the work Ark implemented while he was in Lancel. Ark built his plan on gathering 1,000 users from Schudenberg but it wasn’t 100% certain that he would succeed. Ark wasn’t naive enough to think that users would unconditionally support him if he was famous. Of course, he had already secured 1,000 users from Bristania and 700 users from Seutandal. But to be correct, those users weren’t supporting Ark. While they were influenced by Ark’s fame, the users from Bristania gathered because of Bread and Redian while the users from Seutandal followed because of JusticeMan and the rehabilitation members.

‘Redian and JusticeMan were friendly with the users for a long time which is how they were able to gather 1,700 users in a short period. But I’m in a different position. I can’t misunderstand. Dark Wolf might be famous but he has no connections.’

Ark clearly knew that. Besides, this battle was different from the Lancel defensive war. This time the bad guys weren’t attacking first. Therefore it could be considered an unnecessary battle. Even if he was famous, the users wouldn’t like it if he suddenly talked about fighting the Hermes guild. No, it was likely they would get a bad impression of him like they did Alan.

“He thinks he can do anything just because he appeared on TV?”

Ark assumed that he would sometimes hear things like that after becoming famous. This was what Ark was anxious about. Once they became famous, a celebrity would receive followers and jealousy at the same time. It was because of this that Alan was in an unrecoverable position after making one mistake.

'It's not as bad as Alan but I've reached a dangerous stage. If I use my fame too excessively then I won't be able to gather enough troops.'

Moreover, the minimum level to fight against the Hermes guild was 250. Ark didn't have a network of users so it wasn't easy to gather 1,000 of them. So Ark seeded some plans when he became determined to retake Silvana. It started with the TV.

– (Voice Modulation) Lancel's NPC: The bad people attacked the village and my father died. They are really bad people. My father didn't do anything wrong..... Sob sob sob.

– (Voice Modulation) User who participated in the Lancel defensive war: Ah, it really sucks. In fact, I had received a quest from the Haruna campsite. It was at 80% but the bandit group attacked and I ended up failing. From the viewpoint of the person who was played with, I'm furious. But I'm not the only one who suffered from this in the game.

The Dark Wolf broadcast on the game exclusive news was more like a documentary this time. The title was 'Wounds left by the Lancel Defensive War.' Ark went around Lancel and filmed NPCs and users who had been damaged by the war. In particular, the scene of a little NPC girl stirred the users' compassion. At the end of the broadcast, a scene of Dark Wolf muttering with a pained expression was shown.

"The battle is won but not everything has ended. No amount of compensation can heal the wounds of the residents and users. I can't forgive them. The ones who attacked the village are in jail but their ringleaders are still watching and laughing. As long as those guys are out there, it can happen to anyone!"

While the broadcast didn't specifically mention the Hermes guild, all the users who heard the rumours knew who Ark was referring to. Thus the users started blaming the Hermes alliance for the Lancel defensive war again. It was the reason why Ark produced the documentary. He suddenly became a celebrity so he was bound to receive jealousy. But if Ark gave them a clear enemy to hate then the situation would be different. Since then, the users' anger concentrated on the Hermes guild.

'Now it is an opportunity!'

Ark changed the feelings of jealousy to anger towards the Hermes alliance! Then he concentrated their sympathies on the NPCs in Lancel. It reached the point that merchants travelling to Giran and Selebrid spread rumours that the Hermes alliance was behind the bandit group. Thus the users supported Ark's idea to go and directly punish the Hermes alliance. The Hermes guild was thoroughly branded as evil both offline and online after Ark had increased the atmosphere of indignation.

'But that is not my only goal.'

That's right. There were two reasons why Ark spent all that time and effort. One was to avoid the jealous looks and create an atmosphere where troops can be collected. And the second reason was to isolate the Hermes alliance. Since Ark was gathering troops from Giran, the Hermes alliance would soon discover that Ark was planning to attack Silvana. Naturally the Hermes alliance would prepare its own forces.

'The Hermes alliance is pushed into a corner. They have to gain an overwhelming victory in this battle to show their power. So of course they would scrape into their funds.'

Then the competition of resources would start. No matter how bankrupt they were, the Hermes alliance would have to gather a lot more troops than Ark. Currently Ark had 4,300 users and NPCs. That was the limit. Meanwhile, the Hermes alliance exceeded 5,000 people. He was already inferior. Yet if the Hermes alliance added a few thousand more troops then they could definitely win.

'But this time the Hermes alliance has incurred the users' opposition!'

In such a situation, there were no players that would want to help the Hermes guild. They would be treated as villains if they sided with the Hermes guild. Of course, they could hire NPC mercenaries from Nagaran. While the mercenaries had good skills and abilities that could be taken advantage of in a siege, their employment cost was high compared to users.

'The Hermes alliance already has serious financial problems. While they could pay users for the help, the NPCs are risking their lives so they need more payment. With the Hermes alliance's limited funds, they can only hire a few hundred people at most.'

That was Ark's real purpose. After Ark manipulated the information and changed the users' jealousy towards anger at the Hermes alliance, he had limited the amount of troops they could hire. That's right.

The siege warfare had already started before he even departed from Lancel village. Bread hadn't realized that and was really astonished.

"You really are fearful as an enemy."

"Then you should continue to be my friend."

"Why does that sound like a threat?"

"It is your imagination."

Ark showed his teeth and laughed. Then Racard who was sitting on his shoulders picked his nostrils and muttered.

"Che, by the way his is quite a boring place. Before it used to give off the sweet smell of blood while now it only smells like soil."

"Well, I don't know if it was good but the atmosphere has certainly changed."

Ark nodded and looked around. When he came to Nagaran in the past, there were countless battles taking place. But this time he couldn't even see a single battle. The number of guilds in Nagaran had also decreased. No, to be exact all the small guilds were absorbed into the alliances. In addition, the powers inside Nagaran were settled so there were no more small scale battles. In the past the Lordships used to change but recently there were almost no fluctuations. Despite there being 12 different castles in Nagaran, some Lordships changed once a month. And the 5 major powers in Nagaran had already occupied their estates for 1 year.

'And the Hermes alliance is one of those 5 powers. They are an alliance which has maintained the territory for more than 1 year. They might be weakened but they're not an easy opponent.'

"Can we really win?"

Roco asked anxiously. Ark looked at Roco before replying in a low voice.

“I have to win. No, I will win.”

Then Roco looked at him and laughed.

“Oppa is wonderful in reality but he is even cooler in New World. The form of a wolf also isn’t bad.”

“Saying that all of a sudden.....”

“Hehehe.”

Roco laughed and folded her arms.

“Why are you saying that? There are other people as well.”

“What’s wrong? Bread oppa, are you envious?”

“Yes that’s right, I’m envious. Ah, I really want to see my lady Redian.”

Bread sighed and grumbled.

“Silvana castle!”

Then the voice of a scout could be heard from the hill ahead. Ark raised his head and exclaimed.

“Radun!”

Pa pa pa pa, pa pa pa pa!

Radun rushed forward at tremendous speed. Then a voice filled with emotion flowed out after he climbed the hill.

“Silvana!”

He looked at the territory spread out underneath him. It was Silvana, the estate he had left behind a long time ago! But the Silvana in front of him was different from what Ark remembered. The few buildings which used to be scattered along the farmland was much more diverse and widespread. Thanks to the long-term rule of the Hermes alliance, the territory had become stable. And in the centre of the territory was a huge castle! The size of the castle had doubled since Ark had been the Lord. The walls were much thicker and the various defense facilities couldn't be compared to before. The castle's appearance gave off a dignified feeling these days.

‘The castle changed to a C rating so naturally it would look different.’

Out of the 12 estates in Nagaran, only 5 had been promoted to a C rank. It was the 5 powers who controlled Nagaran. In other words, the alliance had to control the territory for at least 10 months before they could increase the rating. It was probably because they poured enormous amounts of money and time into developing the estate.

“The estate you developed..... I'll soon eat it with this body!”

Ark who had transformed into Dark Wolf murmured in a tone that really sounded like a wolf. Despite the atmosphere, he couldn't seize it first. Since he had gathered the troops faster than expected, there were still several days until the prearranged date of the siege. Bread who had also climbed the hill looked at the surroundings and said.

“The other troops still haven't arrived?”

“They contacted me just then and said they had just passed the border so they should arrive soon. Bread, please wait here and reorganize the troops when the support army arrives. In the meantime I'm going to visit Sid at the Continental Commerce Firm.”

“Huhuhu, you came. Follow me.”

Sid said as he walked forward. In fact Ark really didn't like his attitude. But he needed the hobbit's help so he had to endure the conceited attitude.

'Damn, he'll see after the siege ends!'

“Ark, welcome!”

Wolkosu and Lorenzo ran up to him as he arrived.

“I received word and was waiting for you. My decision has been made already.”

Wolkosu grabbed Ark's hands and said. At one time he was just an NPC of a small store in Cairo and now he was the president of the Continental Commerce Firm in Nagaran. He was clearly promoted a few times more than Sid. However, the arrogance in the hobbit was completely absent from Wolkosu. Unlike a user who could easily change their attitudes, a NPC wouldn't easily change their attitude once there was a high degree of intimacy. Once again, that was the reason why he trusted NPCs more than users. But Ark didn't have time to enjoy the reunion with Wolkosu.

“Are the things I requested ready?”

“Of course, I used the full resources of the Continental Commerce Firm and only selected high quality products.”

Wolkosu guided Ark to a warehouse. All the items he had requested were piled up like a mountain in the warehouse. Magic arrows and whetstones, scrolls, dolls etc. It was the necessary supplies for a siege.

“Thank you for the trouble.”

Ark nodded as he scanned through the list of items.

“What are you saying? It is because of you that my son and I can live comfortably. I honestly wanted to give you these items for free. But I can’t do that so I used my discretion to give you the good stuff.”

“That will be enough.”

Ark answered with a laugh. There was a reason Ark purchased the military supplies through Wolkosu. In New World, despite being the same price the items could have different performances. A typical example was the potions produced by the Seirun workshop in Ciel. Even though they were the same price, the Seirun potions healed approximately 100~150 more health than normal recovery potions. The same thing applied to the magic arrows and the whetstones. So he had used the vast information network of the Continental Commerce Firm and had them only buy the best goods. Moreover, Ark’s store already did some wholesale dealings with the Continental Commerce Firm. When he used the system of trading through the store, it was possible to buy the items for 30% cheaper.

‘But even so…….’

He sighed as he looked at the number at the bottom of the list. The price of the military supplies he ordered was 23,000 gold! 70% of his military funds had disappeared just from buying the military supplies. His heart really felt pained from paying such an astronomical amount.

‘This is only the beginning.’

Once again, this siege was a war for justice. If the siege succeeded then Ark could finally become the Lord of Silvana. If one person profited from the entire battle then there was bound to be complaints. So if the siege succeeded then he would have to pay a participation fee to the users.

‘Well that problem can be left until after I become the Lord.’

His head was already throbbing before he even won. But it didn’t matter. He was going to reclaim Silvana even if he had to die. Ark clenched his teeth tightly and paid the price for the military supplies.

“Here.”

“I hope you win.”

Ark received Wolkosu’s encouragement and exited the Continental Commerce Firm. After loading the goods onto a rental carriage, he returned to the campsite where several people ran towards him.

“Hahaha! Ark, hyung-nim has arrived!”

It was JusticeMan and the rehabilitation brothers.

“It’s been a while..... Hasn’t it?”

Redian who had also arrived at a similar time laughed and waved. JusticeMan and the rehabilitation members also smiled and waved at Shambala and Redian. They had already greeted each other so there was no need for Ark to introduce each of them Ark suddenly flinched and looked around. He finally found Lariette among the rehabilitation members.

“Oppa, did your visit go well?”

When he looked at Lariette, Roco instantly ran out and grabbed his arm. Then Lariette looked at the couple scarves around Ark and Roco’s neck and smiled bitter sweetly before looking away. While Ark was puzzled by Lariette’s expression, Roco’s grip on his arm tightened. When he turned around, Roco’s expression seemed like she was close to tears.

‘There’s something wrong!’

Ark intuitively sensed. It was clear that something occurred between the two of them when he wasn’t here. What was it? Ark felt a strange sense of misgiving. In fact, Ark had carefully clarified his feelings before coming here. And his heart had already somewhat settled down. Ark thought his feelings for Lariette were one-sided so he had no problems organizing it. That’s why he thought about having a serious conversation with Lariette when he saw her. He wanted to get along with her so he didn’t want to become a cowardly type of person. If he told his feelings clearly then it could start unravelling and maybe newer, friendly feelings would begin. Ark carefully withdrew the arm that Roco had grabbed. However he didn’t head towards Lariette.

'Someday..... But now's not the time!'

Ark drew in a deep breath as he looked at the bottom of the hill. The 3,000 troops from Bristania and Seutandal were gathered underneath the hill. And the users Ark had gathered along with the Lancel troops numbered 1,300 people! That was a total of 4,300 people! That's right. Now wasn't the time to worry about feelings! He had to concentrate all his energies on recapturing Silvana.

"Bread, is the organization of the troops finished?"

"Huh? Ah yes, I've divided the troops according to their specialities. Now all we have to do it register the troops."

Bread replied with surprise as he had noticed the subtle atmosphere.

"Okay, then I'll go finish the registration as quickly as possible."

Despite gathering 4,300 people, they weren't a guild so they could only register as units. In order to register, Ark had divided the troops into 20 units. Now the only thing left was to send a declaration of war to the Hermes guild! Ark headed towards the Shrine of War with a determined expression.

"I have to go....."

Sid approached and suddenly said.

"What are you talking about? You came all the way here and now you want to leave?"

"That's what I said. Like Ark-nim knows, I am a person who runs business deals here. If I participate in the battle and the Hermes alliance wins then it will be difficult for me to do business with them."

"What the, what are you saying?" Wasn't I the one who got you that position?"

“Ah I don’t know. I’m a businessman so I have to consider these options. If I can’t engage in business here anymore then Ark-nim will also be troubled. It will all be in vain if I have to leave the Continental Commerce Firm.”

‘This brat really.....!’

Fire burned in Ark’s eyes at Sid’s words. But was anything Sid said wrong? Ark pouted his lips. He really wanted to beat up that face. However he couldn’t say that his words were wrong. During a siege, there was quite a few things for merchants to do including managing the supplies. The reason Ark hadn’t recruited any merchants was because he had thought of entrusting the work to Sid. But if he suddenly withdrew then how could he get a merchant to replace him? No, why didn’t he mention it before when they were talking about the siege?

‘I can’t stand it anymore!’

Ark’s patience towards Sid’s impertinence suddenly broke. Just as he was about to start his mental training.

“Ark!”

When he turned around, someone was running towards the hill at a tremendous speed. Ark’s face became astonished as he saw the face of the person rapidly approaching.

“Eh? Teacher?”

“Huk huk huk, I feel like dying. Anyway, I’m glad I’m not too late.”

The person who appeared like the wind was Isyuram. Ark looked at him with a bewildered expression and asked.

“What is going on? Weren’t you going to Hamong castle? Did you fail?”

Even if the profession change quest is short, it should still take longer than a week. Isyuram had started four days before Ark but he had used the Letter Movement so it should've only taken him two days to reach Hamong. Since there was a magic tower in both cities then it made no sense to walk to Selebrid from Giran. The only thing he could think was that Isyuram had abandoned the quest when he failed and headed towards Silvana. But Isyuram just laughed with a proud expression.

"Fail? Huhuhu, there is no way I can fail. I already finished it."

"Already? Then it wasn't a profession change quest?"

"It was."

"Huh? Then you completed a profession change quest in a few days?"

"It took one day in game time so to be exact it was 8 hours."

Isyuram arrogantly stretched his neck and said.

"Frankly, it was the most interesting quest I've done in the entire time I've played the game."

Isyuram proudly tried to explain the quest contents. Then JusticeMan approached and interrupted.

"Ark, who is this? You called him Teacher....."

"Ah, is this the first time you've seen him?"

When Ark tried to explain, Isyuram hurriedly jumped and blocked Ark's mouth. He studied JusticeMan's face before whispering in a low voice.

"I-idiot. Have you forgotten that I've currently a part of an infiltration investigation?"

“Huh? But.....”

“No. The investigation still hasn’t ended. If a lot of people know my character’s name then how can I investigate later? I’ll explain it to Gwon hyung-nim later so let’s just leave it for the moment.”

Like Isyuram said, it wasn’t a good time to explain everything. Ark nodded and said.

“This person is my teacher from my previous taekwondo school.

“I am called Isyuram.”

Isyuram carefully introduced himself.

“But why did you come here?”

“Oh, you told me that you were heading towards Nagaran for a war. I came to participate.”

“Huh? But you’re a merchant.”

“That’s right. However I’m no longer an ordinary merchant. I’m.....”

Isyuram who was smiling slowly narrowed his eyes. He saw Sid and gazed at him for a while. Sid also tilted his head to one side as he became interested in Isyuram. Then the two people shouted at the same time.

“Ah! You’re the hobbit who cheated me in Giran!”

“Ah! You’re that stupid person who I scammed in Giran..... Hik!”

Sid screamed before he freaked out and shut his mouth. That's right. Sid and Isyuram had met once a long time ago. Isyuram had saved Sid from some monsters. But Sid forgot the favour and scammed Isyuram before running away. Thanks to that, Isyuram hadn't been able to sleep well because of his resentment. Isyuram's face became dark as he remembered the past.

"Huhuhu, to meet an old enemy like this after such a long time. When I think about everything I suffered from your scam....."

"What are you saying? Do you know Sid?"

"What? You know that hobbit?"

"Huh? That....."

Ark was about to reply when he noticed the strange atmosphere. Sid who had slowly turned pale looked horror stricken and ran away. No, he tried to run away. Isyuram's hand shot out and grabbed Sid. He dragged Sid back and said to Ark.

"Let's talk later after I take care of some business."

"Hik, Ark-nim, save me!"

Sid struggled and screamed. However Ark just looked at a distant mountain and pretended ignorance.

'I don't know what happened but judging from Sid's expression, he is definitely the one who made the mistake.'

Even if that wasn't the case, he had just been about to re-educate Sid. There was no reason for him to stop it and help Sid.

"Hey, you....."

“Leave it. Teacher isn’t the type to do things without a reason. He must’ve been truly wronged by Sid.”

Ark stood in front of the rehabilitation members who had tried to interrupt. Then Sid shouted in a tearful voice.

“I was wrong! I admit it so please save me! I didn’t collect even 1 copper of the money I cheated from him! Do you remember the Unicorn’s Horn? I ended up paying that money to Ark!”

“Let’s see? Do I remember something like that?”

Ark pretended ignorance and turned his back to Sid. Sid opened his mouth to say something else but he was dragged into a dark place. Sid’s ensuing scream of distress echoed throughout the place.

“Aaaaaaack!”

Sid’s screams were like music to the annoyed Ark.

“Ark, are you just going to leave it like this? Well, I don’t know what’s going on.”

JusticeMan murmured in a concerned voice.

“Yes, I suppose I’ll end it here.”

Ark smiled and walked towards the site of the violence. When he entered a place surrounded by thick bushes and rocks, he could see Isyuram instantly. But he couldn’t see Sid at all. Sid had been so beaten up by Isyuram then he resembled a bloody lifeform. When Ark appeared, Sid who had been like a corpse got up and grabbed the hem of his pants.

“Sob sob sob. Ark-nim, save me! That person isn’t human!”

“What? This bastard.....!”

“Hik. S-s-save me!”

Ark looked at Sid and sighed before saying.

“I don’t know what happened but Teacher won’t stop without my orders. Well, it would be different if a merchant who was in charge of the military supplies died. Isn’t that right?”

Sid withered up as he figured out the answer Ark wanted. Then he frantically nodded and replied.

“Yes, yes, I’ll do it! I’ll do whatever you want! I’ll work hard!”

“Damn, it can’t be helped.”

Isyuram glared at Sid lying on the ground and said.

“You seem important to Ark this time so I’ll leave it like this for now. But be wary. If I notice you doing anything else bad then it won’t end like this. I’ll chase you to the end of hell! Do you understand?”

“Yes yes, I’ll keep it in mind!”

Sid trembled while lying on the ground as he replied. Ark thought that Sid’s reaction was slightly exaggerated. Even if he had been hit for 10 minutes, this was just a game. Well, his appearance was so horrible that he looked like a zombie but Sid would only feel the pain as static electricity. Why was he making such a fuss over something like that? But there was something Ark didn’t know about Isyuram. Recently Isyuram started to realize he was different from other users. When Isyuram broke his arm then he really felt it but other users didn’t feel that pain. He just couldn’t understand why there were such differences. Anyway, when dealing with users Isyuram always hit the vital spots since it could still cause them a large pain. If he did that as a member of the SWAT team then people would complain that Isyuram was abusing his power. Humans couldn’t stand the pain of having their vital spots hit, but since the users only felt a static shock then it wasn’t like he was torturing them.

‘Anyway, thanks to him the trouble of re-educating Sid is over.’

Ark smirked as he looked at Sid.

“To go so far.....!”

JusticeMan and the rehabilitation members’ eyes widened as they saw Sid’s state. Thus Isyuram planted an intense impression in the people of Ark’s group.

“Now I’m going to the Shrine of War to apply for the siege.”

Ark headed towards the Shrine of War like nothing was wrong.

“I came to apply for participation in the siege.”

“Then please fill out this information first.”

\* Corps:

\*Corps Leader

\*Commander:

\*Number of Personnel: <4,276>

It was the rebirth of Dark Eden. After following the instructions of the priest to enter the information, a new information window popped up.

-You have completed the application for participation in the siege at the Shrine of War.

Currently is the no.1 applicant for the siege. After your forces has applied for participation in the siege, Nagaran is now declared a neutral zone were the enemy can't attack you until the siege is over.

\* Remaining time until the siege starts is 47 hours.

"It has been registered."

The priest nodded and said.

"I'll confirm it once again. Currently the group which has applied for the siege is Dark Eden. There is a redundancy date of one week before the next siege. If you don't have the number of forces you applied to the siege for then you can adjust the date once. If all your preparations are finished, are you ready to begin the siege on the next date?"

"I will participate on this date."

In fact, it was possible to stall the siege schedule. Although he already had 4,000 troops gathered, it wasn't like that for a lot of guilds. The number of warriors, archers and magicians had to be carefully selected with the appropriate levels so some guilds took a while selecting their troops. However time was money to Ark. Just training the 4,000 people would consume Ark's money.

'I can't afford that now. My remaining money is only 7,000 gold. That is about a week's worth of meals. If I make them train then it is only 3~4 days. The only possibility is trying the siege in two days.'

Having thousands of troops really wasn't a joke. Just the cost of the food alone would waste thousands of gold. After he finished the registration and returned to the campsite which was declared a neutral zone, he spoke to his troops.

"I've completed the final registration. We will destroy those villains two days later at noon. Until then it is necessary that everyone trains for the siege. Although there isn't much time left so I know it is difficult, I expect you to listen to the instructions of your unit commander."

“Understood!”

“Now you know what you’re supposed to be doing. Please give it your all.”

Ark entrusted the training of the reborn Dark Eden to the unit commanders. There wasn’t much time left but under the hands of experienced people like Bread, Redian, JusticeMan and the rehabilitation members, he was sure that they could raise the users to a certain level. No, he had to believe that.

“What about you?”

“I’ve got other work to do.”

Ark looked at the huge pile of ingredients at the campsite. Whether it was reality or a game, the portion of food required for a war was the same. In reality hungry soldiers couldn’t exert their strength while in New World, their stats would fall if satiety was low. If they moved a lot then it was natural for satiety to fall quickly. In the end, the food required for 4,000 people after two days would reach the tens of thousands.

‘Thankfully I can get some of it back by selling cheap military provisions at the Shrine of War.’

He had secured enough food already so satiety wasn’t a problem. But the reason Ark bought thousands of ingredients wasn’t just to create food they could eat. There was a meaning to Ark’s food other than raising satiety.

‘From now on I will create survival cooking dishes with these ingredients!’

That’s right. It was his survival cooking which increased stats. In this siege, his numbers and organization abilities of his troops were inferior from the start. While he couldn’t assume that survival cooking would have an absolute effect, wouldn’t it increase their chances? His Survival Cooking skill had reached a High Grade proficiency so he could expect a considerable rise in stats. Of course, actually making the survival cooking dishes wasn’t an easy task. The siege lasted for 24 hours. He would have to provide each person with 3~4 dishes for it to show an effect. 2~3 dishes for 4,000 people meant he needed to cook between 8,000~12,000 dishes. He needed to create 8,000~12,000 dishes in two days!

'I'll make it even if I have to stay up all night!'

Ark pulled out his pot with fiery eyes. And the desperate struggle of Ark had begun.

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"That Ark bastard.....!"

A man muttered in the darkness. The man with dark circles under his eyes was Raiden the Hermes guild leader. Raiden hadn't been able to sleep properly for the last week. Needless to say the reason was the suicide squad's failure to attack Lancel. The secret society had been organized to resolve the Hermes alliance's serious financial problems. But the organization had been shattered and their faces broadcast on TV, causing the Hermes alliance's crisis to worsen. No matter how much Raiden denied his association with the secret society, it was ineffective. All the previous friendly guilds had turned their backs to the Hermes alliance and thousands of people were writing all kinds of stories about them on the forums. But there was even more. From the beginning the Hermes alliance had hunted together. The Hermes alliance which was one of the 5 powers in Nagaran had suddenly become villains. But the really serious problem was the general users. In fact, only Raiden and a few members knew that he had organized the secret society. The general users hadn't known about it. Yet they were suddenly painted as bad guys overnight when they didn't even do anything. Therefore quite a few members had withdrawn from the alliance.

"I've managed to somehow stop the talk but there is a time limit. If there is a rebellion then I won't be able to hold on. I have to regain the alliance's stability no matter what!"

The trouble wasn't just the troops decreasing from the members withdrawing. While the Hermes alliance was being labelled as villains in the public opinion, their financial struggles were still an internal problem. That was why none of the other powers had challenged them yet. However, if more people withdrew then it would be difficult to conceal the internal affairs. Then they would jump on the Hermes alliance like hyenas. The Hermes alliance that was struggling from financial difficulties would die. That's right. The reason why he invested so much money into the defences of his castle and the number of troops was a desperate measure to avoid a siege. In other words, it was a siege deterrent. He would lose a huge amount of money whether he won or lost the siege.

“I have to prevent that situation no matter what. Those hyenas absolutely can’t know that we are having financial difficulties. If Silvana is taken away then we will lose our only source of income.....”

The Hermes alliance would collapse. And the method for Raiden to return the 20,000 gold he borrowed would disappear. The loan sharks would visit his house every day and his wife would take the children back to her parents’ house. He would become penniless overnight. The problem of defending Silvana was linked with the problem of defending his home for Raiden.

“I’ll have to drink a bit of alcohol with the Silver Gate and Noel guild leaders while asking them to manage their guilds. Since they are the largest guilds in the alliance, if they hold firm then the unrest should stop for the moment. Damn, the people are calling every day for my debts while I have to worry about managing the guild.....”

When he thought about it, it really was pitiful.

“Lord-nim!”

Then the doors suddenly opened and one of the alliance members ran in. The member gasped for breath and shouted.

“It is serious!”

“Serious? What? What’s going on? Is there another withdrawal?”

“Withdrawal? No, that’s not it..... Someone from the Shrine of War just got in touch with us. Somebody has applied for a siege two days later!”

“What? A siege?”

Raiden felt his heart fall.

'Damn, we're already struggling for breath and now someone has applied for a siege? Has our financial difficulties already leaked? I'm screwed. Then I will have to continue paying for sieges in the future.....'

"Who are they? What alliance applied for the siege?"

"It's not an alliance but an attack corps called Dark Eden."

"Dark Eden?"

Raiden's mind flashed white the moment he heard the name Dark Eden.

'Dark Eden is the name of the attack group Ark organized before..... He finally came!'

As expected, Raiden already knew that Ark was gathering troops. However, he didn't want to believe that Ark was going to attack Silvana. Indeed, he only knew that Ark had gathered 1,000 users from Giran and Selebrid. Raiden couldn't possibly know about Ark's movements in Bristania and Seutandal. However, Ark's troops had suddenly swelled to 4,000 people when he applied for the siege. Dozens of thoughts passed through Raiden's head after he heard the number of people in Dark Eden.

"Where did he get the rest of the 3,000 people from? How did this guy who has no union manage to gain enough funds to gather that many troops? No, it doesn't matter right now. That Ark bastard, he couldn't even let me catch my breath before cornering me in a difficult situation. Does he want me to be homeless?"

Anger welled up in Raiden's heart.

"Dammit, I will never hand Silvana over to him!"

Raiden shook the table sharply and shrieked. At that moment Raiden came up with an idea.

"Wait, maybe..... This might actually be a chance."

It wasn't necessary to say again but the reason Hermes had become like this was because of Dark Wolf. Now Ark had applied for a siege without even letting the Hermes alliance recover from their troubles. No doubt he was the cause of the Hermes alliance's crisis! But if the Hermes alliance managed to fend off Ark's attack then wouldn't it show their overwhelming power? It was possible to give a good impression of the Hermes alliance to the large number of users watching Silvana. And Ark's fame would have no choice but to fall.

"And despite the current situation, all the alliance members have a grudge against Ark. If they join forces to crush Ark's group then the unity of the alliance will increase again. Yes, this is definitely an opportunity. It'll be the end if we lose but if we win then it is an opportunity to save the alliance from a crisis!"

Raiden considered it before shouting.

"Give an order for all alliance members to gather! Scrape together all the alliance's remaining funds!"

Raiden stopped for a moment before speaking in a cold voice.

"Our enemy is.....Ark!"

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In the meantime, it was 4 hours until the decisive battle. Soon the battle between Dark Eden and the Hermes alliance would begin, no the siege was a battle where Ark and Raiden's life was at stake. It was the eve of the decisive battle! An ordinary user would be looking at the castle to renew their determination. But Ark couldn't afford the time to create a cool atmosphere.

"Ohhhhhh!"

Ark had been rocking his pot like crazy for the past two days without a break. Making sure the meat wasn't too strong or rare, adding salt and pepper with suitable timing, Ark repeated similar actions thousands of times like a robot to cook some dishes. Now just the smell of food felt like torture to him. Then after a while, an information window suddenly appeared.

-The survival cooking dish 'Sweet Muko's Steak' has been completed.

This Muko steak is a dish made with high quality ingredients. The excellent skill of the chef has ensured that the meat has the golden ratio so it has the final taste.

"Huk huk huk, it is done!"

Ark looked at the massive amounts of dishes piled up with a pale face. He hadn't slept for two days while cooking like crazy. After learning survival cooking, this was the first time he had made so many dishes in such a short time period. He had cooked so many dishes that he often had to force his consciousness back after it drifted off. He had a new respect for the Koreans who cooked a feast of food for their relatives every holiday. Anyway, Ark had accomplished his purpose. The number of steaks and pan-fried food piled up was 8,000 dishes!

"Despite the difficulties..... It was worthwhile!"

Now he could distribute two dishes each to each member of his troops. But that wasn't the only good thing from his cooking frenzy. After cooking so many dishes for the last two days, his Survival Cooking skill had risen from High Grade to a Master proficiency.

-After studying the ingredients deeply, the rating of 'Survival Cooking' has risen.

Survival Cooking (Master, Passive): Thanks to your tireless passion, you have finally reached the Master level.

As a master, you have nothing more to learn in this field. After learning all types of styles of cooking and working with different ingredients, no dish is impossible for you anymore. There had been no Masters in New World until now. Thanks to your mastery of survival cooking, you can now cook 'Creative Dishes.'

\* Creative Cooking: Even though you have become a Master, it is just the beginning of a new challenge.

With Creative Cooking, there are no wrong combinations of ingredients and combination dishes can be created which never existed before. In this sense, Creative Cooking gives a special effect to normal dishes. Dishes created from Creative Cooking can be said to be 'not just for eating.' In addition, there is a legend on the continent that Creative Cooking can create the 'ultimate' dish.

It was his first skill which reached Master level in New World! After he became a Master, his speed at creating dishes became incredibly fast. That was how he was able to create 8,000 dishes in two days.

"There hasn't been a lot of time to test it thoroughly but the Creative Dishes is also beyond my expectations!"

After testing, Ark determined that Creative Cooking was like making special items. All the dishes created with Creative Cooking had an odd effect and they could also be food that didn't have to be eaten. And it was the food which wouldn't be eaten that Ark was interested in. The reason for this was because he could create dishes with ingredients he couldn't utilize before. And it possessed an effect that couldn't be imagined for normal dishes. For example, there were a few dishes that would cause a dangerous explosion which mixed with other food. When mixed with rotten food, it was possible to create a poisonous mist. He was able to create dishes that was like attack magic potions. The magic potions were useful in battle because they had no cool down time but it was too expensive and bulky for regular users. Ark was the same as well. However he could create a similar effect thanks to Creative Cooking. Of course, Creative Cooking couldn't unleash the same havoc as magic potions. And cooking it required more time and it couldn't possibly be sold at general stores..... No, to be exact strange ingredients were needed for it. But its strong point was that it was 70% cheaper than the magic potions.

"Moreover most users already knew the effects of the magic potion. But Creative Cooking creates effects that were different from the magic potions. Even the users who grasped all the effects of the magic potion would panic from the attacks of the Creative Dishes. I only know about 10 types of dishes at the moment but the recipes will increase and the ways to utilize the dishes will be endless!"

Hard work would be rewarded with growth. That was one of the ironclad rules of online games.

"That's it. Now everything is ready!"

Ark put the pot away after finishing with his cooking. When he checked, the remaining time until the siege was 3 hours. There was time for a short break. After struggling to create the mountain of dishes, Ark finally looked at Silvana castle. When he raised his hands in front of him, it was like the light of Silvana was in the palm of his hand.

“After tomorrow you will be mine.”

Ark murmured as he made a tight fist. How much time had passed? Finally the light from the sun started to rise on the horizon. Then there was flashing lights as the troops connected one after the other. JusticeMan and the rehabilitation members, Lariette, Roco, Bread, Redian and all the members of Dark Eden were accounted for. When he looked at them, he could sense that they had just woken up. Ark stood up and shouted.

“Let’s go!”