

## Ark Vol 19 C 5

### Chapter 5

#### ACT 5 Grand Strategy, Mackerel Pieces Gamble

“Catch him!”

The cry emerged from the castle. Gwen had led 1,500 troops and ran outside the castle. This was because Ark had destroyed the gate. Ark had avoided the magic of the alliance members and ran away inside the castle grounds. There were still 1,400 members left inside but they had no time to pay attention to Ark. Since there was no time to prepare for the situation, they were preoccupied with repairing the gate. But Ark was the enemy commander and he was an important before who could influence the military situation by himself, so 50 people were chasing after him.

“There is nowhere for you to run away!”

“The skill where our physical attacks don’t connect won’t last much longer!”

The alliance members shouted as they threw arrows and magic at him. The arrows weren’t a problem for Ark thanks to the effect of Slime’s Time. The dangerous thing was the magic. And the number had lessened so the magic was easy to avoid. Ark didn’t worry about the arrows and just focused on avoiding the magic attacks. He used Dark Dance and Sprint to run between walls and have the magic impact with them instead.

‘Huk huk, not long left! I just have to pass this lane!’

Ark once again used a building to avoid the magic and turned the corner.

“Over here!”

Around 20 alliance members appeared before him. They had predicted Ark’s path and moved ahead to block him. Ark became frightened as three magicians started to chant spells. There were buildings blocking his left and right so he couldn’t avoid the damage!

‘Damn, I’ll just have to break through the front!’

Ark rushed towards the front magician. He used Sprint to collide with the magicians chanting who screamed and fell to the ground.

‘That’s it, now I can use the warriors to block the attacks from other magicians.....’

Ark thought that and plunged into the crowd of warriors. Suddenly he felt something throb and a huge amount of his health was sucked out.

‘Huk, what the?’

Ark reflexively turned and looked at the warriors. The warriors had flames wrapped around their sword. The magicians had used a spell to give magic to the warriors’ weapons.

“Kukuku, did you think we would just stay idle?”

“Take this you cocky bastard!”

‘They’ve noticed the weakness in Slime’s Time. I’m screwed!’

Ark looked at the flame swords with horror. That’s right. The biggest weakness of Slime’s Time wasn’t magic, but magic enchantment. While the physical damage was invalidated, Ark would still be hurt from the magic damage. Since his magic resistance had decreased by 100%, that amount wasn’t small. Moreover, Ark couldn’t attack while Slime’s Time was still active. It was possible to avoid the magicians’ attacks since they took a while to cast but the warriors were more difficult.

“You’re dead!”

The warriors cried out as they rushed forward. Meanwhile, the magicians were giving magic enchantments to the other warriors. Once all the warriors had magic swords and the magicians aimed for Ark again, he would be on the defensive. Before he could escape through a gap he created with a

head butt but it was suicide to run towards the warriors holding magic swords. And it wasn't possible to go back. The other 30 alliance members were coming up behind him.

Kwa kwa kwa kwang!

They started attacking earnestly and his health was drained out. But when he used Slime's Time, his entire body was covered in slime so he couldn't open his bag to use any items like potions. Of course, the items inside Radun weren't affected but his whole body was covered so he couldn't drink the potions anyway.

'If only Slime's Time was over.....'

Ark glared at the small icon in front of him. It was the icon which displayed the time remaining for Slime's Time. Now there was less than two minutes left. Ark reduced the damage using Dark Dance and waited for the icon to disappear. When there was only 1 minute left, he felt something hot behind him. At the same time, he lost a lot of health and fell down.

"There he is!"

The other 30 alliance members chasing him had arrived. But they weren't the problem. Ark only had 5% health left. After being hit by the magic and falling down, he had become completely surrounded. If he was hit with the magic sword then he would definitely die!

"Die!"

A warrior swung his sword with a smile of satisfaction. No, he tried to swing it.

"Master!"

Racard fell from the sky like lightning and crashed into the warrior. Then he grabbed the warrior's ear and started head butting him in the nose. The warrior got a nosebleed and retreated from Racard. Meanwhile Ark rolled his body and escaped from the circle.

“What is that?”

“These guys don’t have to concern you. I’ll rush and smash them!”

Then he rushed towards the dozens of warriors holding magic swords. Ark who was leaning against a wall shouted.

“Summon Demon, Razak, Iron Fire Wall!”

Clack clack clack clack, clack clack clack clack!

A bony lump rose in front of Ark and formed into Razak. Razak raised his shield and blocked the flames heading for Ark. The wings of flame appeared on both sides of the shield and blocked the soldiers running towards them. It was the special skill of the Blazing Fire Draconian Shield, Iron Fire Wall! It was a skill with a range of 10 metres which invalidated ‘Dash’ and caused ‘Stun’ and flame damage! When the warriors rushed into Razak’s Iron Fire Wall, the soldiers stumbled and were pushed back. So Razak was able to fend off the warriors’ attacks using his shield. Now Ark just had to wait behind Razak for Slime’s Time to finish.

“What is that?”

“It doesn’t matter. He doesn’t have a lot of health left. Focus your magic attacks on him! Even with that skeleton, he won’t be able to endure the magic attacks!”

The magicians circled Ark and Razak and started to simultaneously chant spells.

‘Damn, I just have to hold on for a few seconds.....’

Ssak ssak ssak, ssak ssak ssak ssak!

Ark had been biting his lip while thinking desperately. Then Radun suddenly moved from Ark’s waist and licked his tongue. Before Ark could say anything, Radun had arrived underneath the magicians’ feet with

tremendous speed. At the same time, an explosion occurred underneath the magicians who were chanting spells.

“Ack! What, what the?”

The magicians’ concentration broke from the unexpected shook and their spells were cancelled.

‘Ah, that’s right! Didn’t Radun learn that skill?’

The skill that Radun used was Fire Aura. Radun had learnt this skill only a few days ago. Ark had been leading the troops towards Silvana from Lancel when Radun’s body suddenly heated up and a message window popped up.

-Your summon Radun has digested 50% of the Burning Heart of the Fire Draconian.

Radun’s body has changed after being influenced by the Burning Heart of the Fire Draconian. When the Alamone grows to a certain extent, it has the ability to master similar skills which belong to other species. When that power is fully absorbed into the body, it can evolve into a new species. While the secret of an Alamone’s growth is still unknown, its body can grow into something completely different under the influence of other species.

After absorbing the Burning Heart of the Fire Draconian, he has begun to evolve into something different from both an Alamone and a Fire Draconian. Every time the absorption of the Burning Heart of the Fire Draconian reaches a certain level, Radun will learn a new skill.

-Your summon Radun has absorbed the Burning Heart of the Fire Draconian and awakened a new skill.

Fire Aura (Beginner, Racial Special Skill): A special skill created by the Alamone after absorbing the power of the Fire Draconians. Fire Aura gives the ability to activate the power of fire. When the ability is used, all enemies within a 20 metre diameter will receive continuous fire damage.

The Burning Heart of the Fire Draconian was a material to trigger Radun's evolution. After reaching 50% absorption, Radun could summon the spirits of fire to deal damage. That was Fire Aura. It was a skill which gave continuous damage like a magician's wide area magic. Of course, the damage was only 10~20 but the unexpected shock caused the magicians' spells to fail. It was a method Ark hadn't even considered.

"T-this snake.....!"

The magicians glared at Radun. However, Ark immediately cancelled his summoning and Radun disappeared.

"You did well Racard, Razak and Radun."

Ark who was hiding in the corner smiled and murmured.

"What? That guy's slime has disappeared?"

The alliance members muttered as they looked at Ark again. That's right. Thanks to the help of his summons, Slime's Time had finally disappeared.

"Good, isn't it possible to hit him with our swords now?"

"He is still surrounded. We just have to smash that skeleton!"

The alliance members swung their swords and rushed to attack. But they still hadn't grasped the situation. The reason Ark had run around until the slime was gone was because he could now use 100% of his skills. Ark threw a piece of black meat that he took from his bag. The alliance members who were about to attack suddenly burst out screaming.

"Blazing fire..... Ack! T-this scent, what.....? Cough, cough!"

"Sniper s..... Eh, what? Ugh, my eyes! I-I can't see.....!"

“Huhuhu, how is it? The taste of my creative dishes?”

Ark smirked while holding his nose. That’s right. The black meat Ark threw was a food made using Creative Cooking. Ark had named the dish he made ‘Hell Bomb!’

-Hell Bomb

A special food made using Creative Cooking. It is created by combining hot peppers, vinegar, rotten meat, horseradish etc. An extremely bad smell which goes beyond human limits is drifting from this dish. If you pull it out in a public place then you will receive a wild beating.

It was one of the creative dishes Ark created, Hell Bomb! The smell was horrible enough to make even Ark lose consciousness. In New World, users might only feel a static shock if their limbs were cut off but their sense of smell was 100% real. The Hell Bomb was just like a gas grenade! The food which smelled like it had been rotting for hundreds of years caused the alliance members to panic and block their noses while rolling on the ground.

“Ugh, I made it but it really does smell horrible.”

Even Ark who was outside the range of Hell Bomb felt nauseated.

‘Anyway, the effect of the smell doesn’t last long.’

Hell Bomb wasn’t a food which could cause an abnormal state. While the smell would initially paralyze the user, their noses would eventually adapt to the smell so it was ineffective. In other words, the Hell Bomb would just cause them to panic for 1~2 minutes!

“Racard, Razak, open the path!”

Snap!

Ark threw his body and kneed one of the alliance members in the face. And he jumped over the person who had fallen down.

"T-this bastard..... Cough..... I won't miss!"

When Ark tried to escape, the warriors rushed to his left and right side. However, they still hadn't completely recovered from Ark's bio-terrorism and Racard and Razak used their skills to push them aside and create a path.

"C-catch him!"

After a while, the pursuing members chased Ark to a place blocked on all sides by walls. Ark stopped running and the voices of the alliance members could be heard behind him.

"Huhuhu, there's no place for you to run away anymore!"

"You might be like a flea but you won't be able to escape anymore."

"That rotten food also won't work anymore!"

The alliance members muttered while the noses were still runny and they had tears in their eyes. At that moment, Ark turned around and laughed.

"It's already finished."

"Heh, are you giving up?"

"No, I'm saying this is my destination."



“This is your destination? What does that mean.....?”

“This is what it means.”

Ark raised his finger while drinking a recovery potion. It was at that time. Suddenly an earthquake seemed to occur in the area.

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“Charge!”

There was a huge dust cloud on the battlefield. It was from Gwen and the 1,500 Hermes members she commanded!

‘There are a lot of engineers in the castle. If I hold on for 10~20 minutes then the gate should be somewhat repaired.’

Of course, such emergency methods can’t be compared to a proper steel gate. It would barely have the form of a gate. However, there were still the Defense Towers. Once the shape of the gate was fixed, it will be able to receive the defense bonus and the automatic durability recovery from the Defense Towers.

‘The problem is that guy’s catapults and his large weapon which looks like a bee hive!’

If those attacks are concentrated on the gate which had been restored using emergency methods then it won’t even last a few minutes. They would only be able to endure if they stopped the siege weapons. That was the reason why Gwen hurriedly led the troops outside.

‘Besides, this is the last chance we have to attack them!’

Currently, Dark Eden had 2,500 troops remaining. But Ark had flown over the castle walls while 500 troops were attacking one of the side castle walls. In other words, Dark Eden actually had 2,000 troops in front of the castle. But that situation where Dark Eden only had 2,000 troops wouldn't last long. Soon the 500 troops would return from attacking one of the side walls and the 1,000 troops who were attacking the Defense Towers would arrive. When that happened Dark Eden would have 3,500 fighters. Now was the only chance for Gwen to destroy the siege weapons!

'Defending while the siege weapons are still working is suicide! But if they are destroyed then we can maintain a defense formation in front of the gate!'

With the support fire of the 1,400 troops remaining inside the castle, we can slowly defeat Dark Eden's 3,500 people.

'That Ark is also trapped inside the castle grounds. If you prevent their attacks and kill Ark then this siege is over. That Ark thought that he couldn't smash the gates in time so he used a shortcut, but that was his miscalculation. The Hermes alliance didn't maintain Silvana for 1 year through luck!'

Tu tu tu tung, tu tu tu tung!

Then the catapult launched a volley of rocks.

"All troops spread out!"

Gwen shouted and the assault unit scattered. The flying rocks only managed to hit a few people. The catapult couldn't show its true strength against moving targets. The Fire Barrage Crossbow was the same. Although the flaming arrows headed towards the approaching troops, most of them missed.

"Huk, run away!"

The raccoons operating the siege weapons screamed as the assault troops came charging forward. Then they quickly disappeared into the ground.

'What the, those guys?'

Gwen was puzzled as she looked at the holes the raccoons had disappeared through. However, the Dark Eden members were even more confusing than the raccoons. Gwen had showed up in front of the siege weapons but Dark Eden didn't even move. Only the raccoons escaped while the assault troops reached the catapults and crossbows. The 2,000 Dark Eden troops didn't move one step or even shoot arrows.

'Why.....? Aha, that's right, is Ark dead?'

A smile of satisfaction spread on Gwen's face after checking Dark Eden's reactions. Dark Eden wasn't a guild or alliance. It was an army which Ark had created by hiring soldiers. But their leader Ark had died and now they didn't know what to do.

'That Ark is really stupid, everything became even easier because he died. Now these guys are just rubbish. There is no need to think when they are the opponents!'

Gwen amended her plan of destroying the siege weapons and retreating. Currently it was 2,000 against 1,500 with Gwen's troops having inferior numbers, but the difference of 500 people won't matter now that they had lost their military leader.

"Assault troops prepare for a 10 minute battle. Units 1 and 2, follow me and attack the siege weapons! Units 3, 4, and 5 will penetrate to the centre of the enemy using the wedge formation!"

Gwen shouted in a huge voice. In an ordinary battle, it was necessary to pay attention to health and mana. If mana ran out then the essential skills couldn't be used. A 10 minute battle meant they didn't have to worry about mana and could use as much skills as they liked. Gwen determined that 10 minutes was enough to deal the maximum damage and retreat to the gate before the rest of Dark Eden arrived.

"Ohhhh, Warrior's Valour!"

"Triple shot!"

When the battle condition of 10 minutes was announced, the assault troops instantly prepared for battle. They flocked forward and used various skills.

Snap, chi chi chi chi chi.....

Suddenly a brilliant light appeared underneath the siege weapons. It wasn't just the siege weapons. The light also spread underneath Dark Eden and started burning here and there.

"What the, this is? It can't be....?"

Gwen flinched and tried to withdraw.

Kwa kwa kwa kwang, kwa kwa kwa kwang!

Suddenly a huge explosion occurred in front of her and fire shot up. The members attacking the siege weapons were thrown back several metres. Gwen was also caught by the explosion in front of her and received huge damage before flying back. But she didn't bother checking her health.

"What, what, what.....?"

Gwen surveyed the area with a blackened face. The area was full of dust and smoke. She saw that the members of the assault troops were scattered all over the place. However, Gwen still couldn't properly understand the situation. What the hell was going on?

'That was clearly a trap just now. Then they already knew we would attack the siege weapons and planted some traps? The siege weapons were used as a trap?'

It wasn't just the siege weapons. The explosion also occurred where the Dark Eden members were. Therefore the assault units who advanced into the main body of Dark Eden also received huge damage. The death toll was 200 people, with most of the casualties being priests and magicians with lower health. It was as much damage as 18 hours of defending the walls. And the rest of the remaining 1,300 people had their health range from 40% left to 10% left. But that wasn't the truly confusing thing.

"The explosion occurred at the siege weapons and within Dark Eden's camp. We were involved in the explosion but those guys were at the centre of it. They are bound to suffer more damage. Then the

2,000 troops and siege weapons were sacrificed just to deal some damage to us? Furthermore, these traps must've been prepared for a while. What is this nonsense.....?'

It wasn't common sense. Anyway, Gwen thought that all the Dark Eden members would definitely be scattered around the place thanks to the explosion. But when the dust and smoke finally subsided, Gwen witnessed an incredible sight. The 2,000 Dark Eden members who had received the explosion were still standing in the same place and looked completely fine.

"This is..... How could they when they were in the midst of the explosion.....?"

Gwen murmured with a bewildered expression. Suddenly the scene where the detonation hit the Dark Eden members came to her mind. Surprisingly, the explosion penetrated their bodies and just passed through?

Hihihihing!

At the same time, a cry of a horse could be heard from several metres away. She reflexively turned her head and spotted a white horse. With a horn in the middle of its forehead, the white horse was a unicorn. And there was a girl riding the unicorn. The situation was already difficult to understand and suddenly this female appeared! Gwen felt a sudden feeling of unease.

"Catch her! Grab that girl!"

Gwen who was struck by anxiety suddenly shouted. At the same time, hundreds of soldiers rushed towards the girl. However, they were a dozen metres from her when the ground suddenly became hollow and sank, causing the rushing soldiers to fall.

"Ugh! A trap!"

"Huk, what is this?"

The screaming soldiers fell into the trap. At the same time, a message window appeared in front of the soldiers.

-You have fallen into 'filth which gives off a bad smell!'

This filth has become stuck to your body. Thanks to the sticky filth, your movement speed has decreased by 30% and your morale has fallen from the terrible smell. The morale of your colleagues will also fall from the stench. This effect will last until you take a bath.

Apart from the creative dishes Ark made, he also dug traps that were filled with stinky filth. It was filth made from the failed products of Survival Cooking and other rotten food..... No, it was fertilizer! The soldiers who fell into the trap had their morale and movement speed decreased. Moreover, the smell was so horrible that the morale of their colleagues also decreased. Then the girl looked at the soldiers who had fallen into a pile of filth and laughed. She stroked the unicorn and said.

"Kikiki, let's go Unicorn!"

Then the unicorn snorted and farted before running away. It was strange to see the fairy-tale like unicorn do such dirty actions. But despite its personality, a unicorn was a unicorn. When it showed of its movement speed of +1000%, the unicorn and girl disappeared like ghosts. And the unicorn and girl were gone, the 2,000 Dark Eden troops blurred and gradually disappeared.

"An illusion? This was all an illusion?"

Gwen finally figured out the reason for the strange incidents. Gwen had heard that the secret society members who attacked Lancel had acted strange. But the section where the secret society suffered immense damage from the illusions wasn't broadcasted on TV. It wasn't a mere illusion, but one that could replicate 1~2 villages perfectly!

"Then what happened just now.....!"

That's right. The girl riding the unicorn was Roco. The Dark Eden soldiers were all illusions created by Roco's Illusion Sonata. However, Gwen was thrown into an even more chaotic state of mind.

“No. Was it truly an illusion? No way. We had been fighting them on the walls. Then we’ve just been fighting against illusions? Impossible.....”

Gwen murmured until she suddenly remembered something.

‘Come to think of it.....It is confirmed that those guys really attacked the castle walls.....’

Yet the same guys never appeared twice!

‘Then..... The reason Ark passively attacked for 18 hours..... Was to hide his troops?’

That’s right. There was a reason Ark had been passive for 18 hours. If he tried to hide all the troops at once, it would be noticeable even with the illusion. But if he attacked the castle with 500 troops and sent them to a recovery place then there would be no suspicion. And Gwen had no reason to pay attention to those 500 people after they left. There was no time for such thoughts when another 500 troops were attacking as long as she confirmed that the main body still had 2,000 people. In fact, the 500 troops which retreated outside of sight didn’t return to the main army. And then Roco filled up the missing 500 spots with Illusion Sonata. It was a trick which took 18 hours! This was the reason Ark had to sneak into the castle to make the gate corrode. Gwen suddenly had a thought which caused goose bumps on her body.

‘Then where did the 2,000 troops disappear to.....?’

Gwen looked back at Silvana castle. If they hid 2,000 troops then this situation where Gwen led 1,500 troops outside was the best timing to attack the castle. Fortunately, there were no traces of Dark Eden moving. The gate had also recovered to some extent.

‘Why did those guys waste this chance to attack the castle? Did they hide the troops just to lure us into this trap? Or did the gate recover faster than they expected so they missed the timing? I don’t know what happened but I feel assured that the worst situation has been avoided. I have to return to the castle and arrange the defense formation before those other guys arrive!’

“Get up, be on guard and return to the castle. You can recover when we reach the castle!”

Gwen rushed the alliance members and arrived in front of the gate.

Kwa kwa kwa kwang, kakang, pepepepeng!

The violent sounds of swords impacting could be heard! The noise continued and there were even signs of fighting on the walls. When Gwen raised her head, she saw that the Dark Eden soldiers were fighting against the Hermes members.

‘What the? How did they get in?’

-What’s going on?

Gwen sent a whisper to the leader behind the walls.

-Gwen-nim, it is a surprise attack by the enemy!

-An attack? What does that mean? Where did the enemy come from? Wasn’t the gate blocked up?

-Those fellows didn’t come from the gate. There are 2,500 of them!

-2...2,500? What are you talking about? How could those troops suddenly appear inside the castle grounds?

-I don’t know. Ugh!

-Damn, what the hell is going on? Open the gate at once!

-We can’t open the gate!

-What? Can’t open the gate?



-Right now the gate is..... We're not the ones repairing it!

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"What, what the?"

"What is this vibration.....?"

The alliance members looked around stupidly. It was a huge noise like something was getting pushed up. The vibrations gradually approached and one alliance member shouted.

"This vibration is coming from there!"

The alliance member pointed to a temple within Silvana that was behind Ark. That's right. The ground shaking vibrations was coming from within the temple. But the size of the temple was only around 10 metres. What was happening inside the temple that could cause this large vibration? The 50 alliance members looked around with a confused expression.

Ku ku ku ku..... Kwaaaaaaah!

"Ohhhhhh!"

"Silvana castle!"

The vibration seemed more frequent until the doors of the temple seemed to burst open. And a huge number of soldiers started pouring out of the small temple. The alliance members' mouths gaped widely at the sight.

"T-those guys are.....?"

“Dark Eden! They are the troops from Dark Eden!”

“Bingo, kill them.”

Ark laughed and drew his fingers across his neck. Then the soldiers from the temple literally swarmed over the alliance members. It was like seeing a tsunami hit a small boat. Hundreds of soldiers had already poured out of the temple so the alliance members’ health quickly ran out. In less than a minute the 50 alliance members had already died.

“Ark, are you okay?”

The voice could be heard from someone leaving the temple. It was JusticeMan, Lariette, Shambala, Isyuram and the four rehabilitation members who didn’t participate in the special attack. Ark drank recovery potions and laughed.

“Yes, you came just in time.”

That’s right. This was the strategy Ark developed to capture Silvana. Using Roco’s Illusion Sonata, he could trick Gwen and smuggle in 2,500 troops. His forces retreating to a place the soldiers on the walls couldn’t see wasn’t for the sake of recovery. It was to gather them in a secret place hidden in Silvana. This was the reason Ark had been convinced of his victory. He knew about the secret dungeon underneath the Asyeosu temple. Before passing the castle to Raiden, Ark had the raccoons dig a tunnel to the dungeon.

‘That is the no. 1 tunnel! Then I just have to drag the troops through the no. 1 tunnel to infiltrate the castle!’

That’s why hundreds of gold was used to trick Gwen, from the 4,000 gold he spent on the Fire Barrage Crossbow to the 50 gold spent on potions that Roco drank to maintain the Illusion Sonata for 18 hours. All that gold invested was to secretly bring 2,500 into Silvana. Anyway, the operation was a great success!

‘But now comes the really important part!’

“There’s no time. It is a speed competition now. Advance to the gate!”

“Wah ah ah!”

Ark led his troops towards the gate.

“Racard, use satellite surveillance mode and report on the situation!”

“Yes!”

Racard replied and flew into the sky.

“JusticeMan ajusshi, rehabilitation hyung-nims, if the troops inside the castle move then the situation will be difficult. Take 800 people and check that the troops inside the castle don’t move!”

“Understood.”

JusticeMan nodded and led 800 troops towards the castle. Ark moved the remaining 1,700 troops across the grounds and arrived near the gate.

“Hey, what the?”

“How on earth did those guys.....?”

The alliance members around the castle fell into a state of panic. It was natural since the Dark Eden members who were gathered outside the gate suddenly appeared inside. But they were experts which had maintained the territory for 1 year and quickly recovered.

“I don’t know the situation but it is too late for it to change!”

“There’s no need to panic. We have 1,000 colleagues inside the castle and 1,500 outside the gates!”

“If we endure for a bit then Raiden and Gwen will come to help!”

“These guys don’t have a lot of people!”

The alliance members quickly got into a defense formation. Now there was only 50 meters between the 1,700 Dark Eden members and the 1,400 Hermes alliance members. Ark ran forward and raised his voice.

“Eat all your food! Lariette-nim, use your set of 3 attack buffs!”

The Dark Eden members simultaneously took out their dishes at Ark’s command. Lariette opened her arms and a white light spread through the area.

“The great warrior’s soul…… Soul’s Disposition, Warrior’s Concentration, Storm Breathing!”

Soul’s Disposition raised attack by 10%! Warrior’s Concentration increased the probability of a critical hit by 20%! Meanwhile Storm Breathing increased the attack speed of sword related weapons by 10%! When armed with 3 different attack buffs and food, their stats rose quickly.

“Pierce through the enemies! Blade Tempest!”

Ark exploded a magic sword and plunged towards enemy lines. At the same time, Dark Eden and the Hermes alliance members collided. It was 1,400 people against 1,700 people! There was a roaring sound like a thunderbolt when the 3,000 troops collided and a fountain of blood spouted upwards. It was like a situation where two tomatoes held in both hands were smashed together. The pressure from both sides caused bleeding among the soldiers. Shorted after both sides collided, the two groups seemed to stop moving.

Kkukukukukuk!

The warriors raised their shields after both sides collided and it became a contest of strength. The atmosphere was just like before a volcano exploded. The swelling lava caused cracks which seemed like they could break apart at any point. While the warriors were having a standoff, the magicians and archers were using ranged attacks to break through.

“Racard, check the arrangement of the enemy!”

In this standoff, the first enemy who managed to hit the opponent with long-ranged attacks would win. In a conflict like this, it would be difficult to find the location of the archers and magicians to intercept them. But the magicians and archers in Dark Eden were easy to see by the Hermes members on the wall. It was the reason why he sent Racard to the gate beforehand.

“There are 50 archers and 20 magicians on the right side. 50 metres to the rear of the troops in the 3 o’clock direction are 80 archers, 30 magicians. While on the left wall there are 60 archers and 15 magicians.....”

Racard explained the location of the enemy troops to Ark. After Ark heard the reported, he handed the information to the long range attackers in Dark Eden.

“All archers and magicians in Dark Eden, focus your attacks on these coordinates!”

“Burning flames of anger..... Rage of fire!”

“Thunderbolt!”

The magicians simultaneously hurled magic at the coordinates Ark mentioned. The archers also shot arrows towards the magicians who were chanting spells to interrupt them. Thanks to Racard’s information, they were able to pinpoint the location and destroy 40% of the enemy’s long ranged attacks. With the burden of a long ranged counter attack eased, Dark Eden started to earnestly attack the enemy. The balance had tilted in their direction.

“Now’s the time. Take this! Dark Blade!”

Ark plunged into the enemy lines which had started to crumble and shouted. Dozens of people followed Ark recklessly and lost their lives. However, Ark had no time to worry about them. In a fight of 1,700 vs. 1,400, there was no time to look back. Ark had to attack the gate so forcefully to subdue it in time. Ark had invested a lot of gold into this so time was of the essence.

'If Gwen's assault troops return then Dark Eden's 1,700 troops will quickly crumble!'

That's right. Dark Eden was able to have a numerical advantage because Gwen had led the 1,500 troops out of the castle. Even if there were casualties from the trap, there were still 1,300 troops remaining. If they returned to the castle then Dark Eden wouldn't be able to endure. So he had to penetrate the enemy line no matter how many troops he lost.

'There are also the 1,000 Hermes troops left in the castle!'

That was the reason why Ark had 800 troops check to see if they moved. If those troops attacked as well then Dark Eden would never win. So his 800 members would block the troops inside the castle for the moment. And.....

"Assault troops, gather your power and charge! Victory or defeat hangs on this charge! Rush!"

Ark led Dark Eden in a wedge formation. The head of the wedge formation was Ark and Shambala!

"Take this, Dark Blade!"

"Torrential Sword!"

Ark and Shambala used their skills, causing the leaders of the enemy to stumble. Thanks to that, Dark Eden managed to penetrate the enemy.

"Waaaaahhhhhh!"

It was the feel of pushing through a hard shell! Once the shield unit of the enemy troops collapsed, Dark Eden quickly managed to reach the gate.

“That’s it. Now take a defense formation on the left and right. Open the path for the engineers!”

The assault troops moved at Ark’s order. They drove the enemy to the left and right side, clearing a path to the gate. Then the raccoon engineers who had been waiting ran through with some big planks. They then placed the boards on the gate and began to nail them in at a quick speed.

“What is going on?”

“Those guys are repairing the gate?”

The enemy said in a confused voice as they stared at the actions of the raccoon engineers. Then an alliance member flinched and shouted.

“They’re not repairing it. A wall! They’re trying to block the gate!”

“T-then the reason they attacked the gate.....?”

“You finally understand?”

Ark laughed as he swung his sword. That’s right. The reason Ark had rushed and sacrificed some troops was for this. It was to seize the gate and build a barrier before Gwen returned. During the Lancel defensive war, he had the raccoons built the barrier on the spot to save time. Thus the raccoons were carrying a barrier like that as they approached the gate. The pieces were quickly assembled and the gate soon became a wall. Gwen who had returned to the castle after being hit by the traps had run into this barrier.

“Damn, smash it!”

Gwen yelled from outside the gate as she finally figured out the situation.

‘Huhuhu, this barrier is different from the hastily built ones used during the Lancel war. It is a special barrier that I paid 4,000 gold for. It isn’t something that can be broken with swords. And this barrier also receives the protection of the Defense Towers.’

That’s right. This was the reason why Bread and Redian hadn’t attacked the Defense Towers properly. The barrier that the raccoons built had become a part of Silvana’s architecture. Thus the Defense Towers bonuses like increased and auto recovery was applied to it. Now that the barrier has received the protection, without any siege weapons Gwen would take many hours to smash it.

“It’s a success! The mackerel pieces gamble!”

Ark shouted as he looked at the finished barrier. That’s right. The strategy Ark came up with for this siege was the Mackerel pieces gamble. In fact, while preparing for this siege the thing he was most worried about was a full-fledged war. This was because the Hermes alliance was superior to him in numbers and other aspects. If there was a full-fledged war then his chances of winning was only at 30~40%. Even if he used the tunnel no. 1 as a surprise attack, he only had a 50% chance of winning.

‘The odds aren’t favourable. This war was one with my life at stake. I need to increase the odds to at least 80%!’

So he came up with the mackerel pieces gamble. The first part had Ark and the rehabilitation members destroy the gates to draw out Gwen’s troops. This was the first step. Then Ark used tunnel no. 1 to seize the castle gates. But there was one problem with this. It was Raiden and his 1,000 troops waiting inside the castle.

‘However, Raiden won’t move!’

The reason Ark thought like that was simple. At this point, Ark and the 2,500 Dark Eden members had already broken in. If he left the castle and joined the Hermes troops outside to make it 2,400 then it would be risky since the enemy could enter the castle. Therefore Raiden decided to wait until Gwen came back. Raiden never imagined that Ark would block the gates. Raiden and Gwen were unable to expect Ark’s plan. Ark had taken advantage of that to separate the Hermes alliance’s head, body and tail. It was like a mackerel which had been cut into pieces! And Ark’s strategy was a success. But the strategy didn’t have a 100% chance of succeeding.



'If the castle forces joined the troops on the grounds before Gwen entered then everything is screwed!'

That's right. The mackerel pieces gamble would encounter a big problem if the head, Raiden and his 1,000 troops, joined with the tail, the 1,400 troops on the castle grounds. The important thing was the body, Gwen and her 1,300 troops. If the head, body and tail joined up then the plan would surely fail.

'How will the desperate Raiden combine with the body now?'

Ark's eyes flashed.

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"Oh my god.....!"

Ark looked over towards the castle. Raiden was watching the gate from the castle with confusion.

"What did it start to go wrong?"

Raiden said as he couldn't understand the situation. When the siege started it was 4,300 against 5,600. No matter how they looked at it, the Hermes alliance had the overwhelming strength. The Hermes alliance also had the Defense Towers and the walls. With this much advantage, it should've been easy. Nevertheless, Raiden didn't feel relieved.

'The opponent is Ark. That fellow has managed to turn a sure-fire defeat around before. He has a strange amount of luck in decisive moments.'

It was unnecessary to say but Raiden had a lot of pride. Ark was a strong guy with a lot of luck when it came to decisive moments. When thinking about the past, he couldn't feel at ease even if his forces were clearly dominant. That's why Raiden stayed inside the castle. Ark knew that he was at a disadvantage when applying for the siege! If he moved outside then he feared he was just playing into Ark's scheme. If he just stayed inside and defended like a turtle then Ark's schemes would be no use. And everything had progressed as Raiden expected until now.

“But what is this?”

Raiden shouted as he punched the wall. How could Dark Eden enter the castle grounds when the gate was tightly closed? Raiden didn't know about the existence of the no. 1 tunnel so he couldn't understand the situation. No, in fact he hadn't thought it was necessary to understand. Dark Eden only had 2,500 troops. On the other hand, Raiden believed that he had 3,900 troops. When Gwen's troops returned to the castle, they could just surround Dark Eden and crush them. But that judgement was Raiden's worst mistake. If he had taken the risk and moved his 1,000 troops then Ark wouldn't have the chance to block the gate. But Raiden never imagined that the gate would be blocked and chose the 'safe victory' path. That had given Ark the time he needed to control the gate. When Gwen's troops confirmed outside the castle, Raiden was now unable to move outside the castle.

'That Ark bastard.....!'

Raiden's blood pressure soared again because of Ark. However, he took a deep breath and pushed down the anger.

“I have to maintain a steady state of mind. If I become mad then I'll just keep getting played by Ark. Yes, I have to be calm. Ark is used to playing cheap tricks but if I think about it carefully, nothing is really disadvantageous for us. Even if the troops on the castle grounds are wiped out, we still have a lot more.”

Raiden calmed down and thought about the situation. The Hermes alliance was certainly at a disadvantage when fighting on the castle grounds. However, they were one of the 5 powers in Nagaran. Dark Eden also has quite a lot of casualties. In addition, they've dispersed their troops so Dark Eden actually only has 1,700 people.

“Even if they wipe out the 1,400 troops, Dark Eden will still receive significant damage. When the battle outside ends, they should only have around 2,000 people left. Combined with those guys who retreated from the Defense Towers, that is 3,000 people.”

However, there were 1,000 troops inside the castle along with Gwen's 1,400 troops. When combined with the 1,400 troops at the Defense Towers, that was 3,800 members. While they had been forced on the defensive from the unexpected attack, the Hermes alliance still had 800~1000 more troops.

“The problem is that is separating the troops. But if we join together then we will win. Besides, there’s only 3~4 hours left so if I maintain the castle then it will be my victory!”

And Raiden knew how to gather the troops. Even if Ark had blocked the gate, it was just a temporary shield. The only reason Gwen couldn’t smash it was because of the protection from the Defense Towers.

“.....If so, the answer is simple.”

Raiden used a Feather of Whispering on the leader of the troops in the Defense Towers.

-When you receive this command, destroy the Defense Towers immediately and return to the castle!

-Huh? What are you saying.....?

-Gwen will explain it when you arrive at the gate.

This was the method Raiden selected. There were two reasons Gwen was stuck in front of the gates. One reason was the Defense Towers protection while the other was that Gwen’s troops were mainly composed of warriors. While there were 1,300 troops outside the gate, it was a limited area so only 100 people could actually attack the gate. However, the troops from the Defense Towers were mainly archers and magicians. If the 1,400 troops from the Defense Towers attack the barrier with magic and arrows then it would only last 30 minutes.

“Then it will certainly be our victory!”

In fact, Raiden was confident that he could maintain the castle with the 1,000 troops for the remaining 3~4 hours. It’s because he had invested a lot of money into the defences of the castle. But this time Ark had managed to unexpectedly hit him in the back of the head.

“I won’t repeat the same mistakes. That Ark bastard, this time I’ll definitely step on him!”

Raiden’s eyes started to shine with an eerie light.

