

Ark Vol 2 Chapter 4

Win the hearts of the People

"Go ahead."

Ark went through the goods in the store.

All of the items available in the store were things he had never seen before. It was inevitable since he was in an Underwater City, and because all the materials could only be acquired in the ocean. Shields made out of seashells, bows made out of Whale bones, Spears carved from tuna bones, etc.

The materials had a slightly crude feeling to them. Perhaps because it was a difficult city to come to, the stats transcended his imagination.

Clam Shield

Gear Type

Shell Shield

Defense

190

Durability

60

Weight

30

Usage Restriction

Level 50, Warrior Related

This shield was made by polishing a large Clam shell sturdy as steel, so it cannot be broken by any sword. It was made with a streamline surface, so it is easy to carry it and swim.

Price

1, 3777P

Electric Eel Breastplate (Magic)

Gear Type

Leather Armor

Defense

70

Durability

55

Weight

50

Usage Restriction

Level 55

Armor made from the hides of Electric Eels living in the ocean depths. Attacks will slide off its slippery surface. The characteristic of Electric Eel remains; it will emit an electric shock with a fixed chance when hit.

10% Chance of counter-attacking with an electric shock when hit.

Price



2,500P

"Of course."

Ark's jaw dropped unconsciously.

He had gathered 3 or 4 pearls when he crossed through the ocean. At that time, Ark was very happy. Since they were rare jewels, he thought they could be sold for a really high price. So far, the jewels he'd occasionally earned were 10 Silver for the low-quality ones, and the high-quality rare ones were worth 5 gold.

But he need 2,500 of those Pearls to buy one armor? Doesn't it mean even if he bought it for a cheap price, it would still amount to 250 gold? No matter how good the performance of the item was, it was an unbelievable rip-off.

But Ark soon changed his way of thinking.

'No, it might be because the the value of the Pearls are unbelievably low in this place.'

If so, there was nothing more to desire. If he acquired Pearls in bulk in this place and took advantage of the value difference, he could amass a sizable fortune.

Ark thought of this and opened his bag.

"If I sold all of this, how much can I get?"

The bag was filled with Clam shells, seaweed, and things like the flesh of marine monsters.

But the store owner muttered in an uninterested voice, "Why would I buy them?"

"What? What do you mean?"

"What? This shoe?"

"Shoe? Ooh, you call it a shoe? It looks marvelous. Do humans wear those on their feet? But I think this is the first time I've seen such material. What is it made out of?"

"What do you mean. It is just animal hide..."

While answering with a flummoxed expression, Ark suddenly had an epiphany.

'Right, this is an Underwater City!'

An Underwater City, the City of Merpeople who spent hundreds of years without any contact with the outside world.

Just like how the Underwater City items were fascinating to Ark, the items found on land were fascinating to the Merpeople; even if it was just a ragged leather shoe. Since they lived underwater, they never had a chance to glimpse at land animal leather before.

In other word, scarcity! No matter where you are, rarity is what decides the value of goods.

Indeed, the store owner's eyes were filled with desire.

"Interesting! Very interesting! Are you saying this is an animal hide? Why did you only show me trash when you have such amazing goods? I don't need the other things, but if you'll sell that or similar goods, I'll buy them all. I'll give you a good price too."

The store owner shook the bag filled with Pearls to say he wanted to trade immediately.

The items Ark currently possessed were no more than japtem. Plus, they were goods with only 1 durability, since he used them to raise his Magic Restoration skill. At a normal village, it was difficult to receive even a few coppers. But the shop owner was saying he would buy them for a good price.

This was definitely a bonanza.

But Ark's hand that was taking out items suddenly stopped.

'Wait, if these items have good value here, then I don't really need to sell them at a shop, right? And I have to raise intimacy to gain information... What if I sell them to Merpeople in the city?'

He could raise intimacy. Granted, there is a limit when raising intimacy by trading. But if he raises his intimacy to a certain level, he would naturally earn the favor of the Merpeople and might come to learn of another method to raise intimacy.

"I'm sorry. I will return."

"How did it get here?"

"It is sparkling? Perhaps it's what you call iron?"

In Nodelesse, iron was something difficult to even catch a glimpse of, there was no way to mine iron ores and refine them underwater. Clam shells, rock, and bones were substituted for iron.

Ark sent out a greeting to the Merpeople who gathered like clouds around him. When it came to selling things, it was something he had done countless of times in reality.

Of course it was his first time having fishes as customers...

"Merpeople with beautiful silver tails, I greet you. I am a Human who is by chance enjoying the honor of visiting the gorgeous city of Nodelesse. They call me Ark."

"Beautiful silver tail, hmm, it's the truth"

Merpeople are simple. He figured it out by taking to the Mermen guards. Just a little bit of sugar coating can instantly raise intimacy, but declining was also instantaneous.

"Today, I will show everyone a couple of items found on land."

Ark skillfully explained like a celebrity who hosts a shopping channel.

"What you are seeing now are various armors made of animal hides which cannot be acquired underwater. In addition, there are iron weapons made with the hearts and souls of Humans. Ah, I know what you are thinking. You must be thinking the performance is subpar. However, these products I'm selling, are not meant for you to use."

"Are you saying we should buy something we're never going to use?"

"You do not understand? Think carefully again. The performance alone isn't comparable to the great weapons of the Merpeople, but they are all made of materials unobtainable underwater. In other words, no matter how thoroughly you look, only one of these items exist in Nodelesse! Only those who purchase them from me can enjoy the right to possess them."

"So that's how it is!"

"For those who still don't quite get it, close your eyes and imagine. Land monsters you cannot even take a glimpse at here. A monster clearing the forest and racing across the plains has been defeated after a fierce struggle by a Warrior. Then it left its hide and was changed into gear such as this. These aren't just items. They are items filled with the history and a touch of the adventurer who hunted the monster galloping down the plains. You can decorate your living room with this. When will there ever be such a luxury underwater again?"

The light in the eyes of the Merpeople looking at the item changed.

Land monsters which cannot be seen or heard underwater! There was no practicality for either a glove or a shoe. But simply purchasing a single sword, they could imagine a world they had never seen.

This mentality stimulated the Merpeople's desire to purchase the items.

Of course, Ark's Art of Communication special stat was applied and it had a large influence on convincing the Merpeople. Art of Communication didn't demonstrate much of an effect in normal stores. But in a special case such as now, it caused profound influence.

"What is this made out of?" A Mermaid child pointed at the glove as it asked.

Ark sported his most friendly expression as he answered, "Ah, it's a leather of a monster called Magal Wolf. Its whole body is covered with black fur, and countless sharp canines are embedded within its gigantic mouth. They looked like they can swallow a person whole. Try touching it. You can imagine the monster called Magal Wolf by the touch it, right?"

"Whoa, feels amazing."

"60P!"

When he finished talking, the Merpeople called out prices frighteningly.

At best, they were goods he could only get 10 Silver on land. But 60P! One pearl was 10 Silver, so it amounted to 60 Silver, 10 times the price!

Ark wanted to hit the ground and wail.

'If I knew this was going to happen, I should have brought anything and everything japtem...'

Not even a few minutes later 20 or so japtem were sold like hot cakes.

Whenever his florid speech raised the price, his Art of Communication also rose. When he had cleaned out all his goods, his Art of Communication stat rose by 13, and he also gathered 450 pearls. Of course, all the Merpeople who bought the goods left with satisfied faces, so his intimacy also rose considerably.

But they still wouldn't tell him about Christin.

Ark didn't worry. 'There should be a strategy even in an unexpectedly ridiculous place!'

After finishing his successful business, Ark became confident.

'Cultural difference is money!'

Nodelesse was completely segregated from land, and that fact held the strategy to raise intimacy. Something completely useless on land had unexpected effects here. As long as he found out what those were, it was no problem to raise intimacy.

Ark immediately gathered information as he wandered through Nodelesse.

What came next to Ark's attention was the restaurant.

The Merpeople had no concept of cooking. Even if you ordered food at a restaurant, only raw seaweed and shellfish were served.

It was inevitable. Fire cannot be used underwater.

However it was different for Ark. The Survival Cooking Pot Ark possessed could boil water without fire, and roast ingredients regardless of time and place! Just like the name 'Survival Cooking' implied, as long as you put your heart into making something, you could even make ramen underwater.

'They'll eat it. Without a doubt, they'll eat it.'

Ark immediately started a food stand in the plaza.

He had so many ingredients left, to the point where they'd rotted and became overripe.

Among the dishes Ark could make with the ingredients he had, Ark chose several good tasting dishes with decent effects. The result was just as he expected.

Merpeople had never even seen cooked food before.

They couldn't even imagine food made from land ingredients. The Merpeople went as far paying an exorbitant fee of 1P per serving and ate the food. And the word-of-mouth of the Merpeople who had eaten it once spread from tail to tail, and long lines formed day after day at Ark's food stall.

Ark made the menu more varied as the sale improved. An invigorating meal with the effect of Health recovery and a nutritious meal raising Strength or Agility were the vanguard. Those special food were priced at a colossal price of 3P! It was really a gimmick to raise the price and receive more profit.

"Ohh, what is this?"

"Is this what they call land meat?"

"I can't believe it. How can you make such distinctive taste with shellfish!"

From children to elderly, from Guards to Nobles of the Merpeople, they didn't spare their praises.

Some Merpeople brought their lovers and strutted as they ordered food. Of course Ark, who had a sense for customer treatment, satisfied the Merpeople with services second only to first-class restaurants.

Thanks to his customer service, his popularity soared even more. Soon the line of Merpeople who waited at dawn was long enough to surround the plaza.

"Welcome!"

"You need to wait 10 minutes."

It was difficult to handle the customers who kept coming even though he made food without rest. In just a few days, Ark became so famous, there wasn't a single Merperson in Nodelesse who didn't know of him.

But it was only the beginning.

"Ah, this is also almost to the point of breaking. Do I need to buy a new one?"

Guards who sought out the stall sighed while looking at the tattered armor.

Ark rapidly approached and put on a friendly smile.

"If it is okay, could I repair the equipment?"

"But I have never heard of a human repairing Merpeople's equipment?"

"For now, please give it to me."

The Guard took off and gave him the seashell armor with an expression of disbelief.

The concept of maximum durability didn't apply to the equipment of Merpeople. Since the materials used to make them were seashells, they couldn't be fixed after they were broken. Even for someone who learned the technique from a Blacksmith cannot repair a seashell with a hammer. But the technique Ark had learned was Magic Restoration. It wasn't the concept of repair, but restoring to its original state.

"Magic Restoration!"

When the skill was used, the tattered armor went back to its original condition.

At the sight, the Merpeople couldn't hide their astonishment. Granted, since it was still a beginner skill, it didn't completely return to original. 10% penalty was applied and durability only recovered by 90%.

A player would refuse the services even if they were paid. But this alone was a shock to the Merpeople. Since one equip was over 1,000P, replacing one was a big deal.

"You are truly incredible! Even a Magician wouldn't be able to do something like this!"

Ark spoke while gasping, pretending to be tired, "Huff huff huff, it's very difficult when I use this technique."

"No wonder, since you did something remarkable. This isn't much, but take it."

The guard readily pulled out 50P.

It was better than selling 20 special cooking!

Ark's pupils flashed with golden light again.

'Nice. I was getting worried since there's a limit to the ingredients.'

"It's too regretful to simply throw away the great equipment of the Merpeople when they are broken. It's difficult for me, but if you have something broken, please bring it to me any time. If it's a normal item, I will repair it for a cheap price."

When the rumors spread, all the Merpeople brought their equipment and swarmed around Ark.

'Hahaha this is truly a cinch.'

He was so happy, he might turn insane.

He used ingredients he couldn't sell in the store to earn Pearls. Was that all? Every time he cooked, he raised his Survival Cooking skill. As he used Magic Restoration while earning Pearls, he was also able to raise its skill proficiency. As a result, the proficiency rose insanely and he raised the Magic Restoration level in three days.

Magic Restoration has risen to Intermediate through a great deal of experience.

* Since both the Nursing and Magic Restoration skill have become Intermediate, you have learned Purification Restoration as an effect of set skills. With Purification Restoration, you can purify curses on any kind of item.

- Once the curse was released, the Sword's original appearance has materialized.

Lancel's Sword (Magic Sword)

Weapon Type

One-Handed Sword

Attack

20~30

Durability

50/50

Weight

25

Usage Restriction

Dark Attribute, Level 50

A Sword used by the Mercenary Lancel, who was famed in the past. The reason why Lancel became notorious was due to the magic sword he wielded corrupting his mind. Lancel realized this and didn't utilize the sword for a long time, but he took up the Sword again to exterminate Kundalini, where he then drew his last breath and died.

The Magic Tool's ability was drawn out by the Dark Walker's job characteristic.

Job Special : If the player who owns the sword has the ability to summon creatures of the Netherworld, you are qualified to make the Familiar and the host of the Magic Sword duel. If the Familiar wins, you can combine the two entities to evolve into a stronger Familiar.

If the player attacks and uses hostile magic to side with the Familiar during the duel, the duel will automatically end in a defeat. In the cases the Familiar loses, it will be forcefully recalled and the appropriate penalty will apply.

Lancel's Sword's (Magic Sword)

Special Effect: Once a day, you can summon the low-class Vampire Dunphil.

"Y-you don't know me?"

"You are a strange one, I wouldn't know the likes of a bat without even a name."

"Kekeke, you dare to come at me with your level of skill, how laughable!"

"Yes. F—k off."

"Huh? What? Are you putting on a show because I'm angry?"

"Master, I beg you! Call that bastard again! I have to fight with him!"

"What?"

Bat ground its teeth as it spoke.

Dunphil was a low-ranking noble in the Netherworld. The arrogant and ill-tempered Dunphil harassed weak monsters as a hobby, and for the most part, its target was Bat.

Bat, who was born as a relative of the Vampire race, was constantly harassed by Dunphil. In addition, he was ostracized by the other bats as per Dunphil's instructions. In the end he was exiled from the race.

'Now that I think about it, this guy...'

Bat's original name was 'Hatred-bearing Bat.'

An explanation how Bat came to bear hatred and rage towards the world because it suffered harassment in the Netherworld; had been attached in its description.

'In such a setting, it can't be helped for this rascal to fight Dunphil.'

After thinking for a while, a wicked smile blossomed on Ark's lips.

'It's a chance.'

"I understand the situation, however I can't let you immediately fight Dunphil."

"Ma-Master!"

"If you fight like the way you did the day before, no matter how much you fight, you can't win against him. You will lose. And if you don't want to lose again listen to me. First, you need to get stronger."

Bat was startled. Getting stronger; in other words, it meant he had to eat food.

However Bat grit its teeth and nodded. "I understand, if I can win against him I will do anything."

"Alright, and another thing, you can't fight like you did before. He's stronger than you. But not enough for you not to win. From today onwards, I'll train you."

Ark did business during the day and started training Bat at night. And when a new recipe came up, he immediately shoved it into Bat's mouth.

Food made with ocean ingredients had a high chance of having a good effect. Whenever it happened, Bat's stats went up.

Bat's training was sparring with Ark.

"Do it right! If you fight that way you can't win against Dunphil! Do you want to be beaten up again?"

"N-NO! I won't lose!"

Pow pow pow!

The days of gruesome training continued.

Unlike usual, although Bat got beaten up by Ark countless times, its fighting spirit burned. After finishing intense training for a few days, Ark called Dunphil out again and had them duel.

Though Bat's stats had risen a few times, it alone wasn't enough to oppose Dunphil yet. But since Bat's skills had greatly improved over the last few days, a battle far more stable than before unfolded.

"Huff huff huff, this, this much is far from it."

In the end it ended with Dunphil's victory again, but there wasn't as large of a margin as last time. Ark smiled coldly at Dunphil, who swaggered in a way unfitting for his appearance.

"It'll be harder next time."

"Christin you say..."

In the past there would've been immediate swearing first, but this time the circumstances were different.

The elderly Merman earnestly pondered and spoke, "There's nothing I can't tell if it's you, but actually, I don't know very much about a person named Christin either. It's not just me. There probably isn't a Merperson in Nodelesse who knows the details about him. It's a name everyone knows, but nobody knows who exactly he was."

"I don't understand. But then why does everyone get upset when I asked about him?"

"It's because we learned to act as such. I only heard from prideful Merpeople during my grandfather's grandfather's time that you had to hate him. But after listening to your words and thinking back on it, I didn't hear why we have to hate him."

He understood, why else would they be fish?

"Isn't there a way to find out?"

"But are you closing down the restaurant now?"

"Yes, I don't have any ingredients left."

"I came after hearing there was a marvelous Crystal Pillar in front of the Palace."

"Could I come in and see it once?"

Even if I have to bear the stabbing pain in my chest I'd still love you.

I believe in your promise.

Until then, I will wait for you at the promised place.

Please do not forget the words I whispered with you.

Through the Knowledge of Ancient Relics, you have discovered the Crystal Pillar's hidden information.

The yearning of a Mermaid for her lover is recorded inside the Crystal Pillar.

For the lover who would find her someday, she carved this in ancient letters. However, sadly, it seems like her love did not come to be.

Knowledge of Ancients +5, Intelligence increased by 5, Luck increased by 2, Fame increased by 10.

"It's him. The stranger who ran the restaurant broke the pillar!"

"N-no, I don't know how this happened either..."

Mermen dragged Ark to the throne room.

Merpeople in noble attire were lined up in the ruby throne room. At their center sat a beautiful female Mermaid who looked to be over the age of 30. Since she was decorated with jewels and wore a crown, it seemed she was the Queen of the Merpeople. But her face was familiar.

Ark easily understood the reason.

'She looked similar to the Mermaid I saw in the Crystal Pillar.'

The Nobles of the Merpeople made a fuss when Ark entered.

"For a stranger to sully the Palace ruins, it's unheard of."

"The fact this stranger entered the Palace is alone enough to punish him."

"However, the Merpeople have always upheld fairness, so even if he had committed the crime, should we not assess the situation beforehand and make a ruling?"

The opinion of the Merpeople Nobles were split in two.

Simply put, it was the opinion of the Nobles who had been Ark's customers and those who weren't. It was probably because of them that Ark, who damaged the royal ruins wasn't executed immediately. If he'd been forcefully deported, it would've been hopeless.

'This was definitely something that should have only been done after raising intimacy.'

The Queen raised her hand to silence everyone and looked at Ark.

"I understand because I heard the words of the nobles, but a stranger damaging the Palace ruins is unprecedented. Of course it is an incident deserving of a heavy punishment. However, I have found the residents of Nodelesse to have great confidence in you. There are even volunteers who wish to take up your defense. It is not easy for a stranger to earn trust. Therefore I will give you a chance to explain. Now, why did you destroy the pillar?"

"I had no intention of destroying it. I just wanted to know about the person named Christin and simply touched it with my hand, but it was destroyed on its own."

"Christin!"

The Merpeople Nobles opened their eyes wide and looked at each other. The Queen also gathered her brows in considerable surprise and asked back, "Are you someone with relations to Christin?"

"I don't know."

"It seems you still need more explanation."

At Ark's response, the Queen sighed and continued, "Christin was the man loved by the Queen who ruled the Merpeople before the start of the Dark Century. During that time, the Merpeople were trading with many races while sharing conversations. But then the Queen went out to the land, and she fell in love with a young man."

"The name of that person is?"

"It was written on the Crystal Pillar."

The Merpeople Nobles stirred with shocked expressions at Ark's reply.

The Queen asked quickly with an expression of disbelief, "Did you decipher the meaning of the pillar?"

"That is correct."

"Lies, it's a lie!"

The Merpeople Nobles flailed as they shouted.

"It is not a lie. If you truly cannot believe it, I will show you the proof."

The quest has been updated.

Entrance to the New World → Guardian Deity of the Merpeople, Gallic

"N-No, that is not it. There..."

Bat's voice trembled more and more.

He turned his head to see what was the matter, but he saw nothing.

"What's wrong?"

"What?"

It was when Ark turned his head to follow Bat's gaze.

The vast background obstructing the view in front of him twitched as it moved. An enormous amount of sand dust rose and clouded the water. Within it, something glossy moved.

"May-maybe that is Gallic....?"

The round object of enormous size turned just then towards Ark!

What were as big as buildings were shockingly its eyes. The enormous background that had been its eyes slowly rose. Bat, Skull, and Ark's eyes also looked up trying to follow it.

He stopped to catch his breath.

Calling it gigantic is nowhere enough to this overwhelming creature.

Ark had felt this feeling before when he was young. It was the same feeling when looking up at Mt. Seorak or Mt. Halla from the mountain base. If there was a difference between them, it was the mountain in front of him being a living creature, a moving organism.

'White Whale, Gallic!' His voice didn't come out.

Ridiculous! No matter how big, isn't it too big?

Did he really have to fight something like this? An ant bit a person. The angered person crushed the ant. You couldn't call it a fight.

Right now Ark was no different from an ant.

The Sword in Ark's hand wouldn't even give the gigantic creature a stinging feeling. In other words, it is like an ant losing all fear and biting a human.

Kuohhh!

The White Whale opened its mouth, revealing a space like a tunnel with a 50-lane road. Simultaneously an enormous pull sucked Ark in.

"WAAAAAAAAAH!" Ark screamed with all his strength.

Then he was swallowed by the White Whale.