

## **Ark Vol 2 Chapter 7**

### Battle of Grey Ridge

"Ahh! Thank you, Master."

"Repeat after me, vow one!"

"I will always obey Master no matter the situation. I will always serve him with a smiling face, fight when told to fight, and die when told to die. My life and death only belong to Master."

"Vow two!"

"If I cannot follow the previous two vows, I will soundly receive some form of punishment."

Dedric's face paled at the continuing Familiar doctrine.

"You've memorized it all, right?"

"Well, there's no need for me to know."

The store owner carefully inspected the pearls and flicked the beads on an abacus.

“I’ll pay 25 Silver a piece. So in total, it’ll be 200 Gold.”

A look of slight disappointment spread across Ark’s face. He had expected 300 Gold; it was 100 Gold short.

‘Should I just go to Harun or Jackson to sell them?’

If he were to go back to Harun or Jackson, where he had high Intimacy, he could get the expected 300 Gold, but it would take a full week to return to Jackson. The monsters he would encounter while going were only level 40, so a round trip meant he had to give up on a fortnight’s worth of EXP.

100 Gold or a fortnight of experience. There was no contest.

‘I’ll have to go sometime because of the ‘Envoy of the Merpeople’ quest, but I don’t have time to do that right now. Since I’ve come this far, I have to at least visit a few cities. It’s regretful, but it’s better to just sell them.’

"Ah!"

At that moment, a user looking at goods in the shop saw Ark and made a shocked expression. Then, with a somewhat angered voice, he pulled Ark by the arm and said, “How could you sell the items without even consulting me? Even if you do sell, you have to sell it after settling the problem of distribution first. Mister, we’ll return a little later.”

[T/N: The other user is pretending Ark is his party member, which is why he’s offended Ark would try to sell the items without figuring out who gets what first.]

“Ah, I’m sorry. You were surprised because I suddenly butted in, huh?”

The man was a Hobbit. He was short and had rounded ears. Since he was covered with many bags, he looked like he was a Merchant. Actually, Ark had let himself be dragged out without a word because he thought it might be some kind of event. But after coming out, the manner of speech and behavior showed he wasn’t an NPC.

“They call me Sid. As you can see, I’m a Hobbit Merchant.”

"What do you mean by a pity?"

“This village’s store is famous in the area for having a low market value. The more you sell, the more you lose. Earlier, you figured the japtem you were

selling was at market price, but you can't find out the true market value like that. If items with high and low values are mixed, there are lots of times when you feel it's generally an alright deal since the sum is similar to what you expect on average. Plus, the value of pearls is low because this village is close to the seaside. If you take them to a city two days away from here and sell, you'll get about 40 Silver a piece."

"40 Silver a piece! It that true?"

Didn't it mean he could get a whole 120 Gold more just by investing two days into travelling? Cold sweat ran down his back. He had been about to squander 120 Gold from a momentary mistake.

"Of course, and if I help you a bit, there's a way to earn another 48 Gold or so." Sid laughed as he implied more profit.

At this point, Ark was more wary than surprised.

Merchant's Contract

Contract Contents: Resale of Ark's pearls, the contract will come into effect the moment the pearls are handed to Sid in Giran. Sid must give all the money obtained from the sale of pearls to Ark.

"We can pass the Grey Mountains with just the two of us."

"I'm sorry. We met by chance inside the store, so we decided to go together. I know the two of you are enough, but as I've said before, I have a reason to get to Giran as soon as possible. Three is faster than two."

"And the escort fee?" asked Hargen, who had an axe tattoo on his face, as he glanced at Ark.

"I will pay the escort fee we first agreed upon, since Ark-nim is also going to Giran with the intent to sell goods. I decided to make the sale on his behalf as payment in exchange for escorting me."

"What did you agree to sell for him that would substitute for the escort fee?"

"Pearls. Perhaps because he wasn't able to visit a village for long time, he collected quite a lot."

Sid was boundlessly talkative. Whether it was in-game or real life, there are many humans who will cluster if it seems like you have some money. As

expected, as soon as they heard Ark had items worth quite a sum, the two warriors examined Ark with gummy eyes.

Though their appearances were unlikable, their actions were just as disagreeable. However, it would be no good for him to withdraw when he had already agreed to accompany Sid just because he didn't like them.

‘I won't see them after 16 hours anyway, so I'll endure.’

After finishing his conversation with the warriors, Sid took out a scroll. It was a [Low-Level Inspection] scroll.

"Then before we go, I would like to do a basic check up. Please understand."

The very first thing a Merchant did when choosing a player mercenary or an escort was to check their information. If they were chaotic players, then there was the chance of being backstabbed. Since the scroll was low level, Ark couldn't check the information. Therefore, Sid explained for Ark.

"Leo-nim is level 64 and Hargen-nim is level 62, both of them job-changed to Warrior."

Warrior was an open profession, but it was a special profession that required 150 Strength.

If you didn't raise your character while intending to become a Warrior from the beginning, it would be difficult to job-change even at level 30. In other words, they were players who had prior knowledge before they began playing the game. They were users who knew much as information as Sid.

"Wow, Ark-nim is really level 65. With this party, 10 hours will be enough to cross Grey Ridge. But your profession is Dark Walker. This is the first time I've heard of it. What kind of profession is it?"

"It's an ordinary thief," Ark answered lightly.

Perhaps it was the image of the name 'Dark Walker', but Sid and the Warriors nodded without thinking much about it. Thief-related professions weren't popular, so there were almost no people who knew the details behind them.

"Ark-nim is the highest level-wise, but it'll probably be a bit difficult to take the lead since you're a Thief. Please leave the front to Leo and Hargen and cover the back. Is that okay?"

"Yes, that's comfortable for me too."

"We're not going to go right away?"

When Ark, to whom every minute and second was precious, asked that, Leo snickered and asked, "Perhaps you've never rested in an inn before?"

The cheapest inns took 1 Silver and the expensive places took up to 1 Gold.

Heath can be recovered while resting on the ground, so why would you pay money to rest at an inn? That's why Ark had never entered an inn.

But Sid explained with a surprised expression.

"Like the time in the store, Ark-nim doesn't seem to know much about the game despite being level 65. The reason people pay to stay in an inn is because of the buff."

"Buff?"

"You can get a buff if you rest at an inn. It's a buff that lasts 1 hour per 10 minutes, for a maximum of 3 hours. The inns have different prices because the buff effects are different. There are places that slightly raise Strength or Agility. Some places even have a buff that raise EXP gain by 20%. This place increases movement speed by 30% and Health by 10%. There is merit in waiting for 30 minutes."

He had no idea. He didn't think inns would have such a secret.



‘No wonder everyone was visiting inns strangely often...’

It was information he could have used if he’d known beforehand. Basic information like this wasn’t on the site forums. No, it could be that it was too basic to even put on the forums. In any case, Ark didn’t even know such basic information because he’d never interacted with users much.

‘Minor info like this can be a big help in the game.’

He added another goal of the journey. ‘For 16 hours, I need to gather some info.’

He couldn't keep living as a beginner forever.

‘They fight in a really boring manner.’

The two Warriors were weirdly strong for their level. Based on fighting techniques alone, they were incomparably lousy. They didn’t even consider avoiding the attacks coming at them. That was characteristic of fighters wearing high defense plate armor. They ignored incoming attacks and just blindly swung their weapons. They didn’t pay any attention to distributing their power, managing the distance, or accuracy. They also kept using their skills until all their Mana ran out.

After clearing a group of monsters, Hargen hefted the axe onto his shoulder and boasted, "Hahaha, what did I tell you? With just Leo and me, even Grey Ridge is no problem. From now on we'll handle it, so Sid-nim and Ark-nim, just watch from the back."

Of course he was doing just that.

'I can't understand deliberately rushing up to fight.'

The group made a party in the village and hit the road. Thanks to this, the EXP was automatically shared even if he didn't fight. Granted, you could get more EXP by contributing more to the fight, but it wasn't worth the loss of equipment durability.

In addition, Ark had no experience in party hunting. Since Leo and Hargen fought in a completely different manner, there would be too many problems if Ark tried to squeeze in.

'Well, since it's only a hunting ground of this level, I'll just sit back.'

- You have been kicked out from the party.

Leo suddenly changed his expression as he said, “We aren’t going any further.”

"Huh? What are you talking about?" Sid blinked as if he did not understand the situation.

Leo grinned and swung his hammer around.

“Since there’s no more business to see with you, I’m telling ya to hand over all the silk and fuck off. Ark, if you leave all your pearls and scam like a good boy, I won't kill you in light of our time so far. You understand without further explanation, yes?”

"Per-perhaps from the beginning...?"

- You have dealt a critical hit!

- With Double Critical Chance, you have landed 2x a critical hit.

- You have defeated a level 71 Chaotic player. Fame +40.

"Lead the way."

Ark equipped the Guardian Armor of the Merpeople he'd been saving and had Dedric take the lead.

The Guardian Armor couldn't be repaired by repair boxes. The only way to repair it was with Magic Restoration, but he'd tried not to use it since that was only Intermediate. But the current situation was different.

"Ask your friend after you revive."

Ark didn't give him a moment and immediately poured forth a chain of Sword-Hand attacks.

'The bastard's level is 73, but if he's around Hargen's skill, he isn't a tough opponent.'

Leo was stronger than Hargen.

First, his level was higher, and his equipment was better. Additionally, because of his shield, it wasn't easy to aim at the gaps in his armor.

But Leo was still not a match for Ark.

"Uhh, what is this? A Bat?"

Dedric, trying to earn back some trust from Ark, desperately held on. He repeatedly scratched Leo's face while matching the timing of the hammer swings and backing off.

As expected, after receiving Ark's rigorous training, Dedric's battle sense was outstanding. In the current situation, he was determining what attack would be most helpful to Ark. As Dedric continued with the attacks, Leo's accuracy with his hammer dramatically fell. Such sloppy attacks were met with crazy strong counter-attacks. As Leo swung his hammer, a counter attack swept past through the gap in the shield.

If a counter-attack succeeds, the attack power increases by 50%!

No matter how good the armor was, there is no way it could handle 150% of the normal attack. In addition, armor is not something that can be continuously used. Leo's armor became tattered in the blink of an eye and his Health was dropping wildly.

"Dammit! You're dead!"

Pressed to near critical state, Leo pulled out a potion.

‘High-grade recovery potion!’

There were all kinds of potions. There is the low class potion, which recovers 100 Health, intermediate potion, which recovers 300 Health, and high class potion which recovers 500 Health. There are also no specific restriction in terms of drinking a Health potion, so as long as one had money they could recover Health anytime. Ark had never once doubted a system like this.

If so, didn’t that mean you would never die if you drank high-class potions like water? However, Ark soon found the flaw in this system.

It lay in the time it takes to drink the potion. While opening the bag and drinking the potion, they are in a completely defenseless state. Of course, this will lead to a higher chance of receiving a critical hit. In the end, even if they drink a 500 Health potion, if they were to lose 500 Health while they were drinking it, it would do them no good.

That wasn’t the only disadvantage. You could intentionally interfere with the player trying to drink a potion. If you attacked the hand, you could make them drop the potion. Ark had learned that when Bat had shoved himself into Andel’s mouth while he was trying to drink a potion.

Because of this, Ark almost never drank potions even when fighting monsters. Of course, the same applied when facing players, who were smarter than monsters.

'Idiot, he was just a high-leveled moron.'

"Dark Charge!"

In fact, Dedric was of a higher level than Leo in the ability to deal with a situation. A black aura poured from Dedric's mouth and blocked Leo's vision. Then, while Leo was confused, Dedric charged powerfully and sent a flying kick.

"Agh! Oowww, my head."

With a thump, Dedric staggered about with a fist-sized lump on his head. Leo, who'd been hurriedly about to drink the potion, shook and stumbled as if he'd taken quite a shock.

Ark ordered without any delay, "Snake, it's an item! Eat it!"

Wrapped around Ark's waist, Snake opened its eyes wide and stuck its tongue out. Like a frog catching a fly, it wrapped its tongue around the potion and swallowed it.

The so-called Familiar combo attack!

After seeing Snake smack its lips, Leo shouted his shock.

"EH! Wh-what is this?"

"Ah, no!" Leo quickly held up his shield.

But before Ark's blade reached the shield, it vanished

Then it appeared in front of Leo's nose and dealt a Critical Hit.

Defense was ignored, and since Dedric, who had been promoted to the magic sword's owner, was summoned, the attack power was even greater. With a violent scream, Leo flew back. He tumbled on the ground until he hit the trunk of the tree and was forced to log out.

Along with 40 bonus Fame, a hammer, two scrolls fell.

"A-Ark-nim...!" Sid, who'd been watching nervously, stammered with a surprised voice.

Well, since the 8 level lower Ark had defeated Leo, of course he'd be surprised.



"What do you mean?"

"Sid-nim, at the inn you said they were lower level than me. You also said nothing about them being Chaotic. So, I thought you and those guys were working together."

"No, NO, I'M NOT! I was also tricked!"

"Well, Ark-nim may not know."

Sid thought for a moment before remembering the scrolls Leo had dropped.

"First, check the items Leo dropped. That would be faster."