

## **Ark Vol 20 C 1**

### Chapter 1

#### ACT 1 Abyss

“Gram, gram, mahogram!”

Dudududu, dudududu!

A group of monsters ran across the swamp. Their overall appearance looked like a lizard. But it wasn't an ordinary lizard. It was a lizard double the size of a human and wearing armour with weapons.

“A rush? Razak!”

Clack clack clack, clack clack clack clack!

Razak rushed forward at Ark's command. He lifted his shield powerfully and slammed it into the ground while flames emerged from both sides of the shield. The flames formed into wings which the lizards ran into.

Kwa kwa kwa kwa kwang, pepepepeng, hwarrrrruk!

With a tremendous roar, the lizards were engulfed in flames and stumbled. It was the special skill Iron Fire Wall from Razak's shield made from the skull of the Fire Draconian. Around 100 lizards were caught by the Iron Fire Wall and their 'rush' was cancelled and they became stunned. In this state it was possible to counterattack and deal massive damage to them! However, Ark didn't dare counterattack.

“Karak, maram! Gram, gram, mahogram!”

A rough voice was audible from behind the lizards. Then the lizards wrapped in flames rushed again along with an extra 100 lizards. When the lizards approached with their swords brandished, Ark bit his lip and shouted.

“Damn, it’s started again, Razak, fall back! Dark Eden, prepare your defense formation!”

“Defense formation!”

100 warriors repeated the command. The ones at the front of the battle formation was the shield unit. They placed their shields down and lifted their spears at an angle. It was a formation designed to strike the enemy while defending against their charge. This defensive formation and the speed at which the warriors formed it was a result of their suffering in the secret dungeon.

Kwa kwa kwa kwa, kwa kwa kwa kwa!

There was a roaring sound as the lizards impacted with the defense troops. The defense formation was formed with 100 people. On the other hand, there were hundreds of lizards which rushed at it. Nevertheless, the defense formation didn’t crumble. Most of the shock from the impact was absorbed into the shield and dispersed into the ground. The lizards who blindly rushed forward were also hit by the spears and fell down. While the defense of this formation was the best, it also had a fatal weakness. Since they required a sitting posture to prevent the enemy’s charge, they were almost defenceless after that. In addition, the size of the monsters was 2~3 metres.

If they attacked from above then there was no way for the shield troops to respond. As expected, when the rush was obstructed the lizards immediately lifted their weapons. If they took an attack in that position then the damage to the shield troops would be devastating. Of course, Ark wasn’t the only one who realized this when looking at the situation.

“Archers and magicians, stop those lizards!”

“Horizontal Fire, Precision Fire!”

“Ray of light which pierces the darkness, Ray!”

A huge number of arrows and magic flew towards the lizards. The reason the warriors crouched down wasn’t simple to raise their defense against the charge. It was to raise the attack of the archers and magicians. The magicians and archers played an important role in battle. Warriors could only attack

when close to the enemy. In other words, if they attacked the enemy then the enemy could attack back. So for warriors a battle was like a war of attrition.

However, archers and magicians were different. They could attack enemies from a distance without receiving any damage at all. When fighting a huge enemy like a dragon, it was difficult for more than a few dozen warriors to attack one monster because of space limitations. However, hundreds or thousands of archers and magicians could concentrate their attacks on one enemy. There were no distance restrictions. So it was possible to reduce the enemy one at a time. Thus archers and magicians were an indispensable presence in fights. However, in practice the archers and magicians' abilities were limited on a large scale. The reason was their allies who weren't enemies.

Archers and magicians had low health so they couldn't be on the front lines. Their role was support at the back. In other words, there were always allies between them and the enemy. The attacks from magicians and archers flew in a parabola in order to hit the enemy. So there was always the chance of hitting their allies first. That's why the archers and magicians were positioned so their curved attacks didn't hit their allies. To users in New World it was common sense. Naturally, Ark had also used that method until now. But he got to know the archers and magicians better after invading the secret dungeon and his thoughts had changed.

'That method is too inefficient.'

The reason Ark thought that was because of how archers and magicians used their skills. Archers and magicians had numerous skills and they were divided into two main types, a straight or curved attack. So if there wasn't an obstacle between the enemies then they could attack directly and if there was then they could use the curved attack. Of course, the horizontal attacks were more powerful. It was similar to when throwing a stone. One thrown in a straight line would be more powerful than one thrown in a curve. The damage and accuracy of a horizontal attack was 1.5 times better than a curved attack! In addition, there were several limitations to using a curved attack. When soloing the most effective skills for archers were 'Precision Fire', 'Rapid Fire', 'Piercing Shot' etc. In the case of magicians, it was skills which had a short incantation speed and power like 'Ray' etc.

But those skills were horizontal attacks and couldn't be utilized properly in a group battle. Of course, the wide area skills had a lot of power in a large scale battle but some of them had cool down time of 2~3 hours. When considering those points, the archers and magicians only showed 50% of their actual abilities on a large scale.

'Is there a way for an archer and magician to wreak havoc in a group?'

Ark had been thinking that since he started invading the secret dungeon. Then he found a surprisingly simple answer. It was the formation where the warriors crouched down and defended. When the warriors at the front crouched down, they exposed the enemies to the archers and magicians. All the obstacles blocking the archers and magicians had disappeared! The archers and magicians immediately changed the way they attacked and hurled horizontal attacks like a machine gun. The arrows and magic flew straight forward like a clothesline and wreaked havoc! Both the power and accuracy was incomparable to the curved attacks.

Kwa kwang, tu tu tu tung!

The precision shooting attacked the vital spots! The arrows accurately stuck from the joints of the lizards. Thanks to the arrows stuck in elbows and shoulders, the lizards couldn't attack without flinching. That was why he wasn't worried about the counterattack when the troops crouched down. When the magician's attack 'Ray' hit the knees, the lizards immediately stumbled. Once the movements were disrupted, an ally would take care of the enemy. With this simple idea, the archers and magicians could use 100% of their abilities in a large scale battle.

"Now's the time. Shield troops, push against those fellows and advance!"

"Ohhhhhh!"

The warriors seemed to bounce up and brandished their shields simultaneously. There was a rough metallic sound and the lizards were pushed back. After they struck, the shield troops immediately sat down again and allowed the magic and arrows to fly.

"Okay, it is a little hard but if we continue pushing like this....."

Just as Ark was about to push against the lizards again.

"Master, those lizards are preparing for a huge rush again!"

Racard's voice could be heard from above.

“Gram, gram, mahogram!”

At the same time, there was a loud roar from behind enemy lines. Then the lizards at the front split to the sides and 100 lizards rushed forward in a wedge formation.

“Bah, it is impossible! Defend!”

Once again the warriors used their shields and spears to build a barrier. Then just before the rushing lizards collided!

“Karakin, baram, noramuda!”

A commanding voice rang out and the rushing lizards simultaneously jumped like frogs. Ark’s heart also simultaneously jumped like a frog. Ark had used that tactic several times so the lizards had already found a countermeasure for it. Just jump over the warriors who were crouching and break through! Ark hadn’t realized that the lizards would think like that and hurriedly shouted.

“Archers and magicians, stop those lizards!”

The arrows and magic blew into the crowd of jumping lizards. The lizards were almost defenceless when they jumped. Once intercepted by arrows and magic, those guys fell into the swamp. However, he hadn’t expected the move so his reaction was delayed. Around half the lizards managed to break through.

“T-this....is serious!”

Panic spread on Ark’s face. Currently all the warriors in Dark Eden were posted at the front. Because the lizards had suddenly jumped over, they couldn’t immediately respond to the situation. Moreover, the lizards still at the front started attacking. If they turned around to attack the lizards who intruded then they would be attacked by the enemy in front. Meanwhile, the dozens of lizards who intruded rushed at the magicians and archers.

“Huck! S-scatter!”

“Keuahahak!”

This intrusion and confused fighting was the situation magicians feared most! The magicians and archers who had lost their protective screens couldn't properly oppose the enemy. Furthermore, the lizards were mixed in with allies so they couldn't fire arrows and magic blindly.

‘Dammit, this is the worst situation!’

Ark's breath felt clogged as he heard screams from everywhere. Of course, only a few lizards had broken in so the magicians and archers could take care of them. But the warriors were tied up with the lizards so the magicians and archers received quite a lot of damage.

‘Yet it isn't possible to let the magicians and archers retreat.’

If the magicians and archers retreated then the warriors would be left isolated with the lizards. The 100 soldiers would be surrounded by the lizards without any support. In that situation, the warriors would be wiped out within a few minutes. Wiped out!

“Damn, if only I had more troops.....”

Ark muttered while biting his lips. In fact, Ark had known about the weak point when he made the warriors crouch down and form a defensive stance. When crouching, the switch between defense and offense was slow and there was a high chance of intrusion if the enemy was willing to take damage. However, no enemy had ever broken through until now. When facing hundreds of large monsters, it wasn't difficult to drive them off. But the defense formation he used now wasn't complete. The original formation Ark used was double the size with two layers. The warriors in front would prepare for a charge. And he arranged another unit of warriors 1 metre behind to defend against any intruding enemies. But the current defense formation only had one layer. Despite knowing the risks, he was forced to use it because of insufficient troops. Currently Dark Eden only had 300 people.

“In this state where the troops aren't replenished, isn't it impossible to capture the dungeon to the end?”

A frustrated sigh emerged from Ark's mouth. In this desperate situation, he recalled the hardships experienced over the past few days.

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"Kuaaaa!"

A huge monster yanked its hair and screamed painfully. With a dark aura wrapped around numerous dead bodies like a veil, the one holding the wand commanding them was the dark conjurer 'Surka.' He was a middle ranked level 650 boss who they met on the 50th floor of the secret dungeon. Just like the alias Dark Conjurer, Surka was a powerful middle ranked boss who could conjure hundreds of undead as his subordinates using dark magic.

"But....."

Ark smiled and muttered. It had been 10 days since Ark started the dungeon. The number of monsters Dark Eden killed to get him numbered in the hundred thousand. All those monsters were experience for Dark Eden. It wasn't simply just raising their level. Of course, raising level was good but the even more important thing was gaining experience fighting against monsters. This was known as 'combat experience.' .....Put simply, Ark's dungeon invasion during the last 10 days could be classified as 'insanity.'

An average of 4 hours sleep. Ark invested the remaining time into attacking the dungeon. He didn't just invest simply into capturing the dungeon, he invested 'terribly.' Normally after an intense battle, most players would take a few hours break. Even if they were just lying down in the unit, a battle lasting several hours required high levels of concentration. But that common sense didn't apply to Ark.

"All of the enemies have been finished."

"Really? Then let's move to the next place right away!"

"Huh? Didn't the battle just end?"

“So what? Hasn’t your health and mana already recovered?”

“That is true however.....”

“Then why do you want to rest?”

Ark couldn’t understand the users who wanted a break. In the secret dungeon, experience and loot were swarming everywhere. Since they troops travelled in a large crowd, the health and mana consumption wasn’t large. In other words, there was a chance of gaining serious experience around the clock without any breaks. Honestly, even the time Ark took to sleep was valuable.

“There are no limits on your stamina. Stop talking and move! Go, go!”

“It isn’t our stamina but our hunger.....”

The users of Dark Eden muttered as Ark spouted some words from an 80’s movie. When the atmosphere became like this, the rehabilitation members instantly interrupted.

“Yes, it’s not like the monsters are running away.”

“Well, we’re not trying to be difficult.”

“Their talk is becoming concerning.”

The rehabilitation members had already experienced hunting with Ark so they were already prepared to die before entering the secret dungeon. But they were finally couldn’t endure suffering so much under a younger brother. Now that the users were expressing their dissatisfaction, they used that chance to try and convince Ark.



“Why would you want to rest when you can raise your level? You can rest anytime but this is a big chance to gain a lot of levels! If other people hunt then you’re hunting and if other people are resting then you’re hunting. This is the secret to gaining more levels than other people! Isn’t it like that?”

“No, what we’re saying is.....”

The rehabilitation members sighed and opened their mouths again.

“That is correct! These days people don’t have any guts. Complaining after only hunting a few days.....how can you defend the territory like this? Raise your spirits and become stronger. Advance, advance!”

The person speaking was none other than Isyuram. As part of Isyuram’s police duties, there were many days without sleep due to undercover investigations, stake outs or emergency standby. So Ark’s reckless hunting was no problem for Isyuram. Besides, it was the first time he could hunt like normal users so he found it quite interesting.

“Damn, are they even humans?”

But the rehabilitation members didn’t know Isyuram’s true identity so they didn’t know why he was a monster like Ark. Anyway, Dark Eden continued hunting thanks to Isyuram’s enthusiastic support. There was another reason for Ark’s quick hunting speed. There was a deeper idea....

‘Capturing the secret dungeon isn’t just to raise Dark Eden’s level. It is more important to ensure that Dark Eden gains battle experience.’

Even if Dark Eden was an attack corps, the troops were used to playing alone. During the siege, they still hadn’t been used to fighting in their units. They were able to win the siege thanks to Ark’s strategy but their organization ability couldn’t be compared to the Hermes alliance. So it was imperative to raise Dark Eden’s ability to fight in units before the next siege. In order to increase that, comradery was necessary.

‘The monsters in the secret dungeon are elite creatures. But remembering battle tricks is different from fighting in an organized group. So their comradery needs to increase. That is the decisive difference between the Hermes alliance and Dark Eden.’

The Hermes alliance had been created for two years. While there was a sense of solidarity from winning the siege, it wouldn’t be enough against an establish guild alliance. If the alliances fighting were at a similar level, this would be the difference between victory and defeat. While the commander could give instructions to the units, it wasn’t possible to direct each soldier’s movements on the battlefield. So it was important for soldiers to move together on the field. Thanks to Ark’s relationship with his summons, he knew how important a sense of solidarity was on a battle. When Ark was executing an operation with his summons, the success rate was completely different when there was a sense of solidarity compared to when there wasn’t. Ark had managed to instil an ‘All for one, one for all’ mentality in his summons.

‘If I use conventional methods then it will be impossible to instil the same sense of comradery as the other guild alliances in just one month. But with this method it is possible.’

After experiencing difficulties in a place like this, their comradery would become strong! In fact, the person who tipped him off to this approach was his passionate supporter Isyuram. The secret to developing solidarity was a method used in the army. Only a person who experienced it would understand. But that method often formed a closer relationship with someone in a month than with a person you’ve worked with for one year.

It was a sense of pride for overcoming difficult times together.

That was the reason Ark used an extreme situation to push the Dark Eden users. After overcoming difficulties together, the sense of accomplishment would change to solidarity between allies. So the soldiers came together just like a real battlefield.

However, Ark’s plan was a success in a slightly different way.

“Damn, I’ll never hunt with the leader again.”

“Quickly escape from the dungeon so we can leave the leader’s grasp!”

The soldiers of Dark Eden were all united in that goal. Everyone united to escape from Ark quickly.....Anyway, one everyone united in one idea the soldiers immediately changed.

“Huck! D-dangerous!”

“Avoid it, ugh!”

A magician was hit by the sword of an undead and collapsed. The magician next to him killed the undead instead. It didn't matter if the undead had 100% health, it couldn't stand up to the organized attack from the magicians. It was because the intentions between colleagues had become mutual. Thanks to that, Dark Eden's organizational abilities in a group became solidified with every day that passed. And they managed to advance to the 50th floor quicker than expected. The boss monster Surka which appeared on the 50th floor was even stronger than the previous bosses that they had met. But thanks to the rise in organizational ability and strategy execution, this boss felt like an easier opponent for Dark Eden.

No, to be exact the troops had found the previous bosses harder. Thanks to the rise in solidarity, the level 650 middle ranked boss wasn't an even opponent for Dark Eden anymore. While Surka summoned many undead and used various curse spells, his health reached rock bottom after 20 minutes of being surrounded by Dark Eden.

“Kuaaaa!”

Surka's health ran out and a piece of flesh fell off him. The rest of the skin collapsed to reveal thin bones.

-Your level has risen.

A wonderful message floated in front of him after Surka died. Ark also noticed cross marks above more than half of Dark Eden's heads.

‘Huhuhu, experience really is rushing in from monsters in this place.’

Ark giggled and opened his character information window.

Character Name Ark Race Human Alignment Good +500 Nobility Title Baron Fame 21,785 (+500) Level 403 Profession Dark Soul Title Cat Knight, Caretaker of the People, Jackson's Hero, Great Adventurer, Magic Institute Member, Seutandal's Hero Health 7,625 (+475) Mana 7,815(+225) Spiritual Power 956 Strength 784 (+58) Agility 1,029 (+90) Stamina 1,269 (+45) Wisdom 205 (+10) Intelligence 1,417 (+5) Luck 209 (+60) Flexibility 268 Art of Communication 79 Affection 129 (+10) Resilience 483 Dark Fog 74 Special stat: Knowledge of Ancient Relics 233 \* Equipment item effects Guardian Armour of the Merpeople (Armour): Water Attribute Resistance +100%, Penalty based on water is nullified.

Cat Paws (Gloves): Attack Speed +10%, Agility +15, Critical Hit +10%

Raccoons Pith (Helmet): Agility + 10, Wisdom + 10

Wolf's Feet (Shoes): Agility + 40, Movement Speed +40%, Attack Speed +10%, 'Jump' is available

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Promised Sword(Two-handed Sword): Strength +20, Stamina +10

Warrior's Transcripts (Shoulder Blades): Strength + 3

Galgashi's Fur (Mantle): Cold resistance + 100%, Agility +20, 'Magic Protection' is automatically activated when health is less than 50%.

Adelaine's Necklace (Necklace): Defense + 40, Affection +10, 'Blessing of the Sea' available

Rarukan's Ring (Ring): Agility + 10, Attack Speed +10%, Critical Hit +8%, 'Dark Protection' available

Ark's Ring (Ring): Strength + 5, Agility + 5, Stamina + 5, Wisdom + 5, Intelligence + 5, 'Sudden Increase in Power' available

Amulet of Vitality (Bracelet): Health + 50, Health recovers by 5 every 20 seconds

Gladiator's Honour (Bracelet): Strength, Agility, Stamina +10, Fame +500, Sword-based Skill Growth +5%

- \* All abilities will increase by 50% in the dark

- \* You have the ability to hide in the darkness (30 minutes duration. Cancelled when you get into combat)

- \* Resistance to Fear, Darkness, Blind, and Seduction spells is increased by 50%.

- \* You can bring out the true abilities from all types of tools.

- \* Shock absorption is increased by 20%.

- \* Poison resistance has increased by 50%.

- \* 10% increased attack and defense.

'It is an average of 2 levels in one day.'

Ark smiled warmly as he looked at the information window. When he first entered the secret dungeon he had been level 383. He had gained 20 levels in 10 days to reach 403. This level up speed was unthinkable in other hunting grounds. It wasn't just Ark. Although there was an individual difference, the soldiers of Dark Eden had gained an average of 10~15 levels.

'I don't know why they're dissatisfied when their level increased by this much.'

Once again Ark thought it was a good idea to capture the dungeon.

‘Instead of ten days, even spending several months in this dungeon is okay!’

However, Ark’s happy mood only lasted until the 50th floor. After defeating Surka and descending to the 51st floor, an unimaginable scene stretched out in front of him. Although it was unnecessary to say again, the secret dungeon was similar to an underground temple. It was complex but it didn’t differ significantly from normal dungeons. However, this completed changed around the 50th level. No, it was more accurate to say that the ‘Cradle of Ancient Evil’ actually ended on the 50th floor. Below was a completely different dungeon. It was an underground cave which seemed to continue endlessly. Once he reached the 51st floor a new information window appeared.

-Abyss (Special)

You’ve discovered a strange cave at the bottom of a labyrinth. This cave hasn’t seen any light in hundreds of years. This deep space is so dark and dangerous that it seems like hell. You can sense a huge, evil presence which surpasses a human’s cognitive abilities from the entrance. That evil presence has noticed that the underground labyrinth was being cleared.

Now you can choose between two options. Either turn away and escape or prepare for a huge sacrifice and head deeper to where the devil lies. Make your choice now.

‘Abyss? This is the abyss? We’re already a few hundred metres underground and now there is the abyss. But the dungeon connected is different from the other dungeon.....’

It was something he had never even thought of. Furthermore, the information in the window wasn’t ordinary. Usually it was possible to grasp the dungeon difficulty by looking at the information window. Since the information window only had dire threats, the dungeon seemed to be unfathomably difficult. However Ark wasn’t going to let that intimidate him. No, he felt even more excited by the threats.

‘I’ve never seen a warning message like this!’

Then the monsters here must be even stronger than those in the underground temple. In other words, wasn't it possible to get more experience and loot? Dark Eden had also changed 180 degrees from when they first entered the dungeon. It was to the extent that he thought the underground temple was too easy. A dungeon with higher difficulty was welcome.

"There's no need to be concerned. Advance forward!"

Ark ignored the threat and entered the cave. Not long after he entered, Ark started to understand the contents of the letter. They had been advancing in the cave for a while when a warning message suddenly flashed in front of Dark Eden.

-You have entered the 'Asmodian' sphere of influence.'

In New World, there are a common race of monsters called Asmodians that are discriminated against. The Asmodians are a species which belong to a hell space and their existence will warp the space itself. When entering the presence of a strong Asmodian, the space will distort powerfully and an 'Asmodian sphere of influence' will form.

The demonic monsters are those who have been deformed by this influence. When the Asmodian influence permeates the air, the area will also change to a hell space.

'Asmodian? Demonic? Perhaps.....'

Ark flinched as he verified the information window. Hearing the word 'Asmodian' was alarming. The Dark Lord who invaded New World a long time ago belonged to a family of Asmodians. And they covered the continent with their power. When the Dark Lord disappeared, the Asmodians disappeared.

'In other words, a family member of the Dark Lord is hiding somewhere in this cave?'

It was unexpected but when thinking about it, it wasn't that strange. The official name of the secret dungeon was the Cradle of Ancient Evil. If it was called an ancient evil in New World then wouldn't it be related to the Dark Lord?

'And monsters until the Asmodian influence will be mutated.....'

Just as Ark was thinking that.

"Grrrr!"

Suddenly hundreds of red lights appeared in the darkness. They were intense and vivid eyes burning with anger.

"The enemy! Prepare to defend!"

Ark's voice cried out in the darkness as he saw the hundreds of monsters. At the same time, the members of Dark Eden screamed.

"Huk! What, what the? Those are?"

"Ack! D-disgusting....."

The monsters that appeared in the darkness had terrible forms. They were similar to the Goats and lesser demons he met in the underground temple. However the monsters seemed like they had been joined together before it suddenly stopped halfway. The whole body was covered with some form of viscera and something which looked like a baby's end sprouted from the skin. It was more disgusting than scary.....no, it was disturbing and grotesque. Even the confident Ark felt disgusted by the sight of the monsters. Some users even became nauseous.

'They've been mutated?'

"Kuwaaaaah!"



Then they shrieked and ran forward.

“Steady! This isn’t the time to be put off by an unpleasant sight!”

Thus the battle between Dark Eden and those influenced by the Asmodians started. The way they attacked was odd. The creepy monsters squirted pus all over the place. When affected by the pus, it would cause the ‘plague’ status and health would be continuously lost. They even become confused and would attack their allies. The baby hands sprouting from the body also squirted acid venom. Thus the health of Dark Eden members quickly decreased. It was an abnormal look and abnormal attacks. Dark Eden became surprised and panicked. 100 soldiers quickly collapsed.

“Damn, push them back and keep your distance. Jjak-tung, please use your skill to grasp their alignment and specialities!”

“U-understood. ‘Knowing oneself and one’s opponent’!”

When Jjak-tung used the skill, a ray of light shot out from his eyes and hit the body of a monster. At the same time, an information window appeared in front of Jjak-tung.

-Name: Corrupted Agurin

Level: 400 (Elite)

Health: 7,000

Description: Agurin that has been mutated (Asmodian). Abilities have been increased by 10%.

Characteristics: Blunt weapons resistance +50%, Resistance to blades -20%.

Specialty: Hundreds of small hands growing from the body will squirt acid poison and deal continuous damage.

A weird sound will emerge from its mouth and everybody with a weak resistance will be affected by 'fear.'

When its health falls below 50%, it will be enveloped in insanity and have its attack increased by 50%. However, its defense will fall by 50% when affected by 'Frenzy.'

It was the special skill of the Guardian= Strategist, 'knowing oneself and one's opponent!' When Jjak-tung used the skill, information about the monster instantly appeared. Ark's 'Skill Penetration' could only confirm information about the skill just used. With Jjak-tung's 'knowing oneself and one's opponent,' it was possible to get information about all the monster's skills. Jjak-tung continuously informed Ark about the level and skills of the monsters. If he knew about the skills the monsters possessed then he could come up with an idea to deal with it.

For example, if the Agurin tried to use 'Capture' or 'Fear,' he could just have the archers and magicians attack from a distance. After they've been caught by the long distance attacks, the warriors could then attack Ark used the rehabilitation members who had changed to Guardian=strategist to place a type of token above the head of a monster.

The monsters for warriors to take care off had a sword token. The monsters for magicians and archers had an arrow mark. A wand shape indicated a monster vulnerable to magic while the skull mark indicated a dangerous monster.....He had used this classification system during the underground temple. Once sorted like this, the soldiers would know what to do despite the confused fighting. After the monsters were classified, the Dark Eden members who had fallen into confusion regained themselves and started fighting.

"Don't be confused by their appearance!"

"No matter how strange it looks, it is still a monster!"

"Unit 1, keep your distance from those with a skull mark. They use wide area skills!"

“The ones that look like a caterpillar are resistant to blunt attacks. Use your swords!”

Dark Eden had experienced a variety of situations in the underground temple. After the unexpected situation occurred, there was no reason for them to be surprised again. Once the situation was arranged, they started methodically attacking the monsters. After a few monsters were driven to a critical condition, an abrupt message window appeared in front of Ark.

-The Corrupted Agurin's health has fallen below 3% and you can extract the demonic aura.

“My guess is correct!”

The monsters which were influenced by the Asmodians had been changed. So Ark was quite happy that the opponents had a demonic attribute. Thanks to Eternal Soul, every time a demonic monster appeared his attack power increased by 20% and his resistance to that attribute increased by 30%. Furthermore, when the demonic attribute appeared didn't it mean he could produce the cursed japtem? Of course, creating the cursed japtem wasn't necessary. The standards of the cursed japtem could at most be used for Blade Tempest.

“But the important thing is the process of creating the cursed japtem.”

That's right. When he used Demonic Seal, he received a bonus of 20~30% experience. After ten days of wandering around the dungeon, his stockpile of cursed japtem had decreased. If he could build up that pile again and receive 20~30% bonus experience then he wouldn't lost any money.

“Okay, the guys with 3% health don't kill and just gather them to this side! I'll suck every last bit of experience. Demonic Seal! Demonic Seal! Demonic Seal!”

Ark was the type to get even 1% more if it meant he could get more leather, meat, experience etc. Ark just continuously fired Demonic Seal whenever the message window appeared. After 20 minutes, all the monsters had been changed into cursed japtem.

“Huhuhu, this is actually quite decent?”

Ark made a pleased smile after confirming how much experience he got. He had honestly been a bit concerned after seeing the warnings in the information window about the dungeon. But when he came

in, wasn't the experience actually quite good? Although his abilities were decreased by 10% thanks to the Asmodian influence, if the monsters were similar to this then he was confident.

"The monsters of this standard aren't difficult."

Furthermore, it was possible to receive an additional 20~30% experience! Thanks to that, Ark now saw the Abyss as a field of experience.

"Okay, let's go! I'll eat up all the experience here!"

.....At this point, Ark couldn't imagine what would happen in the future. No, Ark was mistaken. When the warning message about the Abyss first appeared, Ark thought it was referring to the monsters. But the danger of the warning message wasn't referring to the monsters. Ark hadn't thought it was necessary to confirm the real risk. Tuduk, tuduk, tuduk tuduk. After the first successful battle, they advanced through a stone bridge. Suddenly out of nowhere, there was the sound of chopped wood. The first person who heard the sound was the warriors at the front.

"Eh? That sound wasn't audible before?"

"What are you talking about?"

"Let's see? It sounds like something cracking?"

"I don't hear it? Aren't your nerves just too keen because of the Abyss?"

"Is that so?"

The lead warrior scratched his head with an embarrassed expression.

Kwa kwa kwang, puhwaaaak!

There was a sudden loud roar and the warrior scratching his head disappeared. The user who was just talking to the warrior couldn't understand what happened. Then he saw blood on the ground and shouted.

"F-f-falling rocks!"

That's right. The warrior had been hit by a huge stone pillar which fell from the ceiling and disappeared in an instant. That was just the beginning. Who could blame their colleagues who witnessed the scene to run away in panic? The sound continued and enormous stones started to fall from the ceiling like hail.

"Stone pillars are falling"

"A-avoid it!"

The interior of the cave became a mess of confusion in an instant. However it was already too late. The soldiers crumpled from the merciless hail of stones. But there was even more. While the stone pillars were falling from the ceiling, the ground started to shake. The stone bridge was unable to tolerate the shock and collapsed.

"The bridge is breaking!"

"Run! If you fall in then it's the end!"

The stones were falling and then the stone bridge collapsed! In this situation, level and organizational abilities didn't help at all. While screaming and avoiding the stones, the bridge collapsed and they fell to the bottom..... It was like a scene of misfortune from a movie. While some barely escaped from the place, at least 400 soldiers had died.

"What is this nonsense.....?"

Ark murmured as he looked at the stone bridge which disappeared.

“Phew, I thought I would really die this time.”

A soldier sighed as he leaned on a rock. At that time, there was an audible noise from the rock he was leaning on. The soldier felt a strange feeling and flinched as he stood up. Suddenly, the soldier was pulled into the rock by an absurd sucking force.

“What? R-rock? The rock.....is alive! Waaaahhhh!”

Soldiers who were leaning on rocks were sucked in. The soldiers' flesh and bones were turned into rock as they were sucked into the rock. Then blood seemed to pour like oil from the bottom of the rocks. They were rocks which sucked in people and ate them!

“Everybody get away from the rocks!”

Ark hurriedly exclaimed as he belatedly realized the situation. But 100 soldiers had already been sucked into the rocks. The other soldiers were trying to tug on their arms but it was ineffective. They could only save a few soldiers after the warriors crushed the rocks. Just minutes after losing 400 soldiers, another 100 had died in vain. They had died from the hail of stones and the people eating rocks. But that was just the start. On a narrow road lava surged like a tidal and there were also areas where poison would spout from the ground like a geyser. They weren't traps but a natural phenomenon. Thanks to that, the scouts couldn't predict where one could occur.

“This is the danger from the information window.....”

The warning wasn't about the changed monsters or the reduction in stats. It was pointing to the dungeon itself! Just like the monsters, the dungeon was also changed by the Asmodian influence. It had been changed to a hell place. It wasn't so strange that this place had turned into a hell. By the time they reached the next layer down, 700 people had died without even swinging their weapons. In the end, Ark had to make an important decision.

‘I can't be assured of what will happen if we continue into the dungeon. It is different from fighting with monsters. No matter how I handle it, there is no choice but to suffer damage. Well, it's okay if the users are hit but the NPCs are the problem.’

No matter how distressing the death, the user would revive again after 24 hours passed. Unfortunately the NPCs weren't immortal. If they died once it was the end. So after coming here, Ark always arranged the NPCs in the safest place. Therefore only 20 NPCs had died by the time they reached the 21st floor. But the risk in the Abyss was incomparable to that of the underground temple. This was a place where hundreds of people could be completely destroyed with only one mistake.

'The important goal of capturing this dungeon is to raise Dark Eden's level and cooperative play. However, there is no point raising that if the NPC troops die. I can't bring the NPC troops to such a dangerous place. Just having the NPCs in the dungeon is dangerous. If we go further down there might not be a chance to return.'

Ark made the decision to send the NPC troops from Seutandal and Lancel back before it was too late. And he also told the users who had resurrected not to enter anymore. It had already been 10 days since they started capturing the dungeon. Some monsters would've already revived in the upper layers. Therefore many users would die if they just blindly entered the dungeon. Of course, if they entered in units then it was possible to fight the monsters but it would take considerable time to descend.

'There are natural traps everywhere. Even if the troops are arranged and down, the risks will still be the same. I can't gather any information about this place so no matter how many troops there are, there is a chance that a lot of them will be wiped out before managing to join up.'

While users could be resurrected, if they died then they would lose levels and stats.

"There are no more troops and ingredients. If all the remaining troops are destroyed then the dungeon invasion is a failure!"

Since then, Ark's method of invading the dungeon changed 180 degrees. When he invaded the underground temple, he just pushed the troops through like a bulldozer. But now he couldn't expect any more troops or ingredients. Thanks to that, his priority was to preserve the troops rather than how quick he could clear the dungeon. Ark organized the soldiers who had various scouting skills to observe before moving the troops. If they discovered a group of monsters, they wouldn't attack without reason and would lure the monsters to a 100% safe place to fight. They also avoided as much monsters as possible while marching. The purpose of the dungeon expedition had changed from reaching the last floor to survival. Thanks to that, they took 6~7 hours to travel a distance that would've normally taken 3~4 hours. Nevertheless, they kept on facing unique situations and the troops kept on decreasing. After 4 days had passed since Dark Eden entered the Abyss, there were only 300 people left.

“But without a doubt, the 300 people who survived are the elite of Dark Eden. Their combat power and crisis management skills are the best. In such a situation, it might be better to move with elite troops rather than a lot of people.”

Ark’s judgment was correct. The cave after that continued to be dangerous but the number of casualties had decreased. That’s because the soldiers who were still alive had the skills needed to survive. In addition, the troops had decreased so much that they were easy to command.

“Okay, if these troops are maintained then we can even defeat the final boss!”

Ark who had previously thought about giving up halfway had now placed his hopes on the 300 elite troops. However, that hope faded away as soon as he reached the 60th floor. When he finally arrived at the 60th floor, it seemed to be made entirely of ravines and swamps. Dark Eden carefully crossed the ravine and entered the swamp. An armoured monster 2~3 metres big had appeared in front of them. A red warning message floated in front of Ark at the same time.

-The medium ranked chief of the Abyss Demonic Troops ‘Vega’ has appeared!

“A middle ranked boss monster!”

Ark flinched and immediately used Eyes of the Cat for information. However an unexpected result appeared. So far he had been dealing with level 500~650 boss monsters. But the boss monster Vega who appeared on the 60th floor was only level 450.

“Why is the boss monster in a deeper place lower levelled? Does it have a special skill or something?”

Ark was thinking that when something interrupted.

“Kurak, kurak, haradura kurak!”

Ku ku ku ku, ku ku ku ku, ku ku ku ku!

Vega who had discovered Dark Eden shouted in a strange language. As a result, an absurd number of monsters appeared from the swamp behind Vega. They were around 1,000 lizard type monsters that



were level 400! Even if he had 2,000 troops, he would barely be able to defeat the 1,000 level 400 monsters. However, currently Dark Eden only had 300 people.

“We’re screwed!”

Ark’s expression instantly became dark.