Ark Vol 20 C 2

Chapter 2

ACT 2 Dungeon of the Blind

"Forget the 1,000 monsters and just focus on the one middle ranked boss!"

Ark shouted as he stared at Vega giving orders from hundreds of metres away. That was the best thing Ark could think of in this desperate situation. Of course, the lizards weren't Vega's summons so there would still be 1,000 of them even after the boss died. With only 300 people, it was inevitable that they would be wiped out by the lizards.

"Even if we die, we won't just die like this!"

Anyway, Vega was the current boss of the 60th floor. If they defeated him then wouldn't they collect a lot of experience and loot? With any luck, they might be able to run away after dealing with Vega. Using that glimmer of hope, Ark started a bloody battle against the lizards. As expected from the 300 elite soldiers who survived the Abyss, they managed to execute the plan perfectly and lasted for 10 minutes against the advancing lizards. However, as expected the lack of troops was fatal.

While the warriors crouched down and built shields, the magicians and archers intercepted the lizards. After they impacted with the barrier, the warriors could get up and push the lizards back. But thanks to the crouching down position, it was possible for the enemies to break through by jumping over the barriers. But he had no choice thanks to the lack of troops. After the situation repeated many times, the lizards noticed the weakness and jumped through. It wasn't possible for them to face this situation.

"Waaaaahhhhh!"

Screams were everywhere as dozens of lizards broke into the camp. The long range attackers had no chance against level 400 elite melee monsters. The archers and magicians instantly lost 20~30% health. Furthermore, the lizards were mixed with their allies so it was difficult to attack properly. However, he also couldn't call the warriors back to deal with them. Thanks to the lizards inside their camp, the lizards at the front had their attacks strengthened. If the warriors turned around to attack their allies then they would be attacked from behind in an instant. Of course, only dozens of lizards had broken through. The problem was how much damage the archers and magicians would receive before the lizards were killed.

Now that the weak point was found, it wasn't possible to use the crouching down defense formation anymore. The method to get to Vega was lost.

".....Is it going to end here?"

Ark moaned as he thought about the situation. One lizard smashed the head of a magician and rushed towards Ark. Ark who was looking at another place wasn't able to respond properly and could only flinch before withdrawing a step.

"You idiot, where did your spirit go?"

Then Isyuram's voice was suddenly heard from behind him. At the same time, Isyuram jumped over Ark's shoulder and kicked the lizard. The lizard who was hit in his jaw stumbled and retreated. By the time it recovered its centre, Isyuram was already right in front of the lizard.

"This is a big lizard.....shall I see how good its endurance is?"

Isyuram smiled and soared through the air.

Pepepepeng!

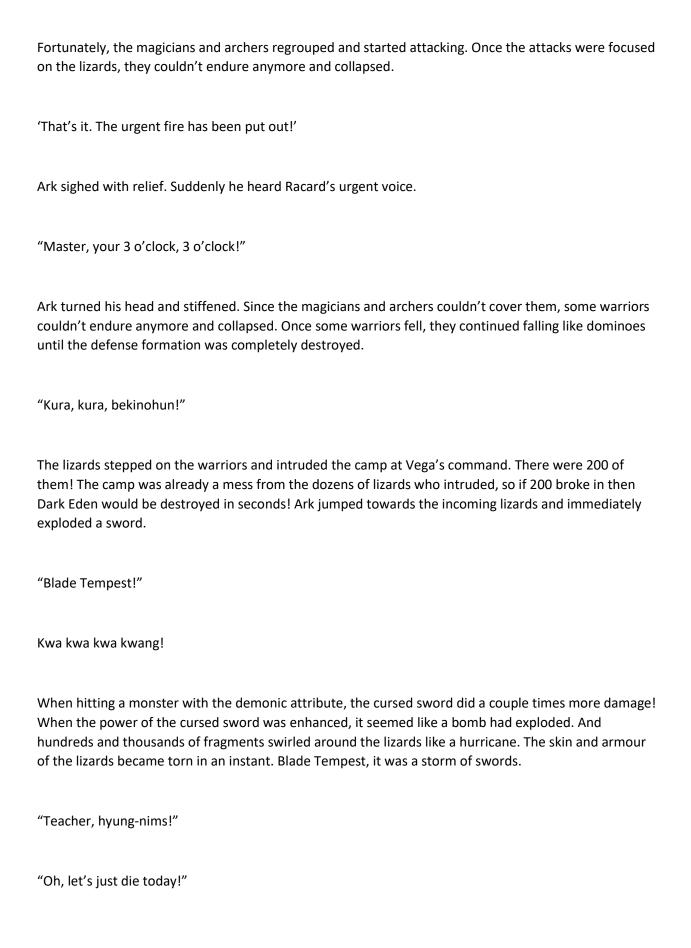
It was subsequently followed by continuous roars. At the same time, several clear fist marks were seen on the lizard's armour. Then it was hit in the jaw, the nose, the forehead.....It was Isyuram's deadly attacks which aimed for the vital spots. If a person was beaten like that then they would have to go to the hospital.....no, the attacks were enough to put someone into a mortuary! The lizard kneeled down after receiving the successive critical hits.

"Disappear you stupid lizards!"

At the same time, Isyuram's knee sprang up and hit the jaw of the lizards. The head was forced backwards and Isyuram then kicked the neck. With a huge roar the lizard flew away and became stuck in the swamp. It was an amazing combat ability! Once again Ark realized Isyuram's skills.

"Ark, have you already forgotten what I taught you? Do you want me to teach you again?"
Isyuram muttered as he turned his gaze from the lizard to Ark. Ark recalled the words Isyuram taught him in the police agency's gym.
"Never give up!"
"I know that."
Ark raised his voice angrily and Isyuram just laughed.
"But even if you know, it is different if you can't put it into practice. You foolish student."
"I'm aware of that."
Ark said before hitting his face with his palm. That's right. It wasn't Ark's style to give up no matter how hopeless the situation was. He didn't have the manners to accept defeat and die politely. Ark's style was to grab their ankles and hold on dirtily until the very end!
"I'll fight until the end! Take this, Dark Blade!"
Ark ran towards a lizard and twisted his sword. The sword which had darkness assimilated into it pierced through the flank of the lizard. A violent blow rang out and the lizard retreated. Ark narrowed the distance between him and the lizard. He threw his body like Isyuram and subsequently kicked the vital spots. Then another lizard close by threw a spear.
"Not a chance. Dark Dance!"
Ark used Dark Dance and avoided the spear. Then he did a roundhouse kick and knocked the lizard's sword down.





Isyuram and the rehabilitation group also rushed towards the lizards. And they acted like a literal clot. They couldn't allow the lizards to intrude or Dark Eden would be destroyed. Ark, Isyuram and the rehabilitation members fired various skills without a break and prevented the lizards' penetration. Meanwhile the archers and magicians focused all their attacks on the lizards. But once it started collapsing, it was impossible to stop it. The lizards didn't have high attack or agility. But their defense and stamina was at a considerable standard.

It took a considerable amount of time to kill just one. So Ark, Isyuram and the rehabilitation members could only stop 10 lizards from entering. Meanwhile the other lizards broke into the camp. Once the lizards' intrusion was permitted, there was no possibility of enduring. The warriors had barely managed to get a barrier up again to prevent more lizards from entering. But waves after waves of lizards attacked and some parts of the barrier collapsed again. Once it became like that, the warriors were unable to maintain the barrier at all. It was the worse situation.

"Dammit!"

Profanities burst from Ark's mouth. The 200 allies and 1,000 lizards were completely mixed up together now. When this occurred, the soldiers had no choice but to fight 1 against 3 lizards. Even Ark was confronting at least 5 lizards attacking him with spears. Ark had no chance to counter the attacks coming from all directions.

"Damn, Dark Blade....ugh!"

Ark was about to swing his sword when he received a spear in the chest. And another lizard swiped Ark with its tail and he flew back several metres. While he avoided falling into the swamp, he was blown towards a place where dozens of lizards were gathered. The lizards simultaneously attacked him when Ark fell on his side. A hopeless light started to appear in Ark's eyes.

'It is the end if I'm surrounded!'

Then some rocks that were a few metres away caught his eyes. At the moment, thoughts started spinning quickly in Ark's head. If he entered a gap between the rocks then it was possible to avoid being surrounded by the lizards. And he could deal with incoming opponents 1 on 1. It was a common tactic to use a narrow place to limit the number of enemies.

"Dark Dance!"

Ark used Dark Dance and slipped through the gap in the rock like a ghost. Then he turned his body and faced the lizards. However, Ark witnessed an incomprehensible situation.

As expected, one lizard had followed him to the rocks. Although it thrust a spear.....it unexpectedly thrust several metres away from Ark. At first he thought it was a mistake but then it happened again. It would attack, strike a rock, attack and so on. Despite Ark standing in front of it, it missed and struck the rock a few times before running off back to the battlefield. Ark forgot about counterattacking because of the abnormal behaviour and looked on in dumb surprise.

'What's this?

There must be a reason for its strange behaviour. After realizing there was something wrong, he started watching the lizard's behaviour closely. Right now there was a violent battle occurring. It seemed to look no different from a normal battlefield. However.....

'Something is different. There is something strange about the lizard's behaviour. What is it?'

Ark watched the scene for a while. No one in Dark Eden seemed to sense it but Ark was sure there was something questionable about the lizards' behaviour. After a while, Ark finally had some idea of what it was.

'Perhaps....don't tell me.....is it really like that? No, it is the best explanation for that situation I experienced before. And if my guess is correct.....'

Ark instantly ran out from between the rocks. After searching the swamp for a bit, Ark was able to find the body of a dead lizard. After examining the dead body, Ark's guess was 100% confirmed. Ark instantly had a spark go through his head. The questionable behaviour of the lizards, the terrain of the battle, Vega's response.....all of it flashed through Ark's eyes.

'.....I can win this fight!'



soldiers were sure they were about to die so there were in a gloomy mood. There were only 120 soldiers

who managed to escape from the lizards. 180 soldiers died in between.

'But if this plan succeeds then 120 soldiers can survive!'

"What's going on? Why did you tell us to retreat to this difficult place?"
Isyuram and the rehabilitation members asked as they sunk up to their waists in the swamp.
"It is to lure Vega"
"Vega? Vega the lizard captain?"
Their eyes looked dubious at Ark's answer. It was a natural reaction. Vega always stayed hundreds of metres away while giving out orders. So why would Vega suddenly enter this place? Ark just answered with a confident expression.
"There is no doubt that he will enter here. But those lizards will arrive soon so I don't have time to explain. Just believe in me."
"What?
"For now all members should hide their bodies in a suitable place."
"You want us to hide here?"
"Anywhere suitable is fine. And"
Ark explained what the Dark Eden members needed to do from now on. The soldiers couldn't understand Ark's direction but scattered and hid themselves as directed. Well, there weren't that many places to hide themselves so around half of the troops couldn't find a hiding spot. But Ark already had a method to solve that problem. Ark looked at Jjak-tung who nodded and shouted.
"Understood. I don't know if there will be much effect butFeng Shui!"

-The effects of Feng Shui have been applied to the attack corps.

Feng Shui is the unique skill of the Guardian=Strategist.' Using Feng Shui will increase resistance to all environmental and terrain effects. Bonus damage will be added when attacking an enemy from a high place and conversely a penalty will be applied when attacking from a low place. If addition, you can hide your body using the darkness and terrain features to avoid detection by enemies.

It was 'Feng Shui,' the special skill of Jjak-tung who had changed to a Guardian=Strategist! When the effects of Feng Shui were applied, the soldiers instantly became blurred. If they didn't move and blended into the environment, there Feng Shui would decrease their chances of being found. Of course, it was different from 'Stealth' and the person could be discovered if looked at closely enough.

"What will we do?"

"Just hide in this area with me."

Ark replied to Isyuram and the rehabilitation members.

"Master, the lizards are gathering."

Racard whispered in his ear after spying with satellite mode. Ark, Isyuram and the rehabilitation members quickly hid themselves. Immediately afterwards, he could hear splashes as several hundred lizards gathered at the entrance of the swamp. Then they started looking all over the place for the Dark Eden members. The soldiers became tense at the lizard's behaviour. Although they hid themselves, it wasn't as good as stealth so the lizards could spot them if they looked closely enough. Since the soldiers were scattered all over the place, if spotted they wouldn't be able to get away unscathed.

But soon the soldiers became aware of something strange about the lizards. Despite such sloppy hiding, they couldn't find them at all. Sometimes they would push their face right where a soldier was hiding and still couldn't spot them. In the end, the lizards couldn't find the soldiers and just starting swinging their spears randomly. Since it was swung randomly, sometimes the spears would pass close to the soldiers. In such a shaky situation the soldiers didn't even dare breathe. Ark had emphasized many times

before hiding to 'not move or cry out!' After there were no reactions to their spears, the lizards stopped moving. And......

"Master, that guy! The big lizard is heading inside!"

Then he heard Racard's voice again. After receiving Racard's information, Ark craned his neck and looked at a corner of the ravine. There was a yell and Vega who was surrounded by 30 lizards approached the place where the Dark Eden members were hiding. Currently Ark, Isyuram and the rehabilitation members were hiding in the swamp near the entrance of the ravine. Naturally Vega moved straight towards the place where Ark's group was hiding. After checking where Vega was, Ark quickly submerged his head in the swamp again.

'From their movement speed and distance, that fellow should arrive in 1 minute. Now to countdown. 60, 59, 58, 57....."

Ark calmly counted down the numbers in his head. He finally stood up after 1 minute passed. When he raised his body, the huge figure of Vega could be seen 3~4 metres in front of him.

"Dark Blade!"

Dark Blade split through the space and pierced Vega's chest. Isyuram and the rehabilitation members also simultaneously attacked Vega.

"Kura? Baratura, abera....."

Vega seemed at a loss and made upset sounds at the sudden attacks. The moment he tried to rattle orders....

"I won't allow you. Teacher!"

"Right!"



Ark withdrew after feeding Vega the bomb and shouted. At the same time, 120 soldiers stood up from their hiding spot and shouted. Then an amazing thing happened. Previously while attacking Vega, they had been surrounded by lizards. So why did the lizards disperse in different directions away from Ark's group after hearing the soldier's shouts? A satisfied smile appeared on Ark's face.

'As I expected!'

Ark had discovered the weakness of the lizards. He had noticed the lizard's strange behaviour of futilely attacking the rocks where Ark was hiding. After watching that behaviour, Ark could only think of one answer.

'Perhaps those guys are blind?'

It was the only explanation for the lizard's strange behaviour. Then how could the lizards fight so far? And how had they managed to fight Ark just then? He had those sorts of questions. But the answer wasn't that difficult to discover. The lizards were commanded by Vega. That's right. Vega acted as the eyes for the lizards. This was the reason why Vega couldn't directly participate in the battle. He became the eyes for the lizards and conducted them in battle. Since blind people had their other senses develop, the lizards depending on their hearing and Vega's orders to fight. That was why Ark felt a strange uneasiness during the battle. He often thought it was strange that the lizards ignored injured soldiers at the front and ran to an unexpected place. He forgot about it during the heat of the fight but once he started watching from the rocks it was really obvious.

'Those guys can't see. They depend on Vega's commands and instincts to fight. So even if they are directly in front of me, if I don't make any noise then they won't notice. And they will instinctively run to the area where they hear a loud noise!'

That was the reason why Ark searched for the corpse of a lizard. The first thing he did was check their eyes and mouth. He figured out why the lizards didn't really defend. Since they relied on hearing for location of the enemy, the only thing they could do was attack. In other words, they had no choice but to give up defending and just indiscriminately attack! It was why Ark made Dark Eden retreat to the ravine. Vega couldn't see inside the ravine. The soldiers were hiding so the lizards couldn't find them. In the end, Vega had to come inside the ravine in order to understand the situation and direct them. That's why Ark hid at the entrance and fed Vega the Fiery Sausage. Vega couldn't give anymore commands inside the ravine. In other words, the eyes of the lizards had vanished!

'It doesn't matter if it is 120 against 1,000 when the opponents are blind!'

Ark's plan for dealing with the lizards was divided into two. There was plan A where Ark's group preventing Vega from interfering and the soldiers scattered the lizards by making noises. And plan B
"Over here. You stupid lizards!"
"Try and catch me!"
All of a sudden some soldiers on one side spat out insults. The lizards that were scattered everywhere started to run up to them. Then the soldiers shut their mouths and another group of soldiers on the other side started shouting.
"You're so slow that it is impossible to catch me!"
"Hey, lizard! No, are you a water lizard? Over here!"
So the lizards rushed back and forth between the shouting soldiers. The lizard's IQ was in the single digits.
'Wasn't that guy their eyes and heads?'
Ark smiled and looked at Vega. Vega had tried to give commands many times after seeing the lizards rush to and fro. However, the strength of the Fiery Sausage was no joke.
"Kasikuka"
Thanks to the swollen lips and tongues, all he could do was make strange noises.
"Now I can fight you directly like the other bosses. Dark Blade!"

Ark brandished his sword and ran towards Vega. Isyuram and the rehabilitation group also simultaneously attacked Vega with their skills. Vega's health quickly fell to 20% from the shower of attacks. This was another reason why Vega didn't participate in battles. Vega was the eyes and head of the lizards so he was like an advisor. Despite his inflated level, he was a boring boss who couldn't do anything alone. Vega didn't even carry any weapons.

"Ku.....ku......ku......"

Vega just continued making strange sounds as he waved his hands and struggled. Ark assumed it was supposed to be an attack. But none of them would be hit by an attack of that standard. They quickly avoided Vega's attacks and continued using him as a punching bag.

After 10 minutes.

"Ku....!"

Vega let out one last cry and collapsed.

"Okay, we've dealt with the middle ranked boss!"

Ark quickly turned his body and looked at the lizards. The lizards were still being fooled by the soldiers while their leader was being killed. In other words......It was slightly pitiful looking at them. However that pity quickly passed.

"Shall we clean this up?"

Ark laughed as he looked at the lizards. With Vega handled, dealing with the lizards wasn't hard. Ark organized his troops into groups of 70 people. They would separate and lure around 20 lizards away. The bigger the noise the more lizards there were in the area. By splitting into units, they could lure the lizards to another area and attack. Then lure again and attack. They repeated that dozens of times and took care of all the lizards.

"W-we did it!"

"We really killed all the lizards!"

The Dark Eden members murmured to themselves. It was reasonable. Who would've imagined that 120 people could win against 1,000 elite monsters and a boss? Nobody would believe it. Anyway, Ark and Dark Eden had accomplished their task. They also received a huge amount of experience thanks to their incredible work. Ark went up 6 levels. And the other soldiers gained an average of 4~5 levels. That wasn't all.

"We've obtained 178 general and 42 magic items from the lizards."

"We also got 3 magic items from Vega."

The loot was enormous due to the numerous lizards. After entering the Abyss, their priority was to survive so they had avoided battle wherever possible. So there was a feeling of no loot but this battle quickly made up for that. The most valuable things were the 3 magic items dropped by Vega. Despite his abilities, Vega was still a boss.

"Do you want them?"

"All right. I'll pack them in my bag."

Ark clicked his tongue and murmured. After entering the secret dungeon, they had fought tens of thousands of monsters. So they also received a huge pile of loot. About 30% of them were magic items while 10 rare items dropped. The combined value of the items would reach thousands of gold. But they were split among the troops so each person only received dozens of gold at the most. So Ark didn't even hesitate to accept the loot.

'That is the problem with capturing a dungeon with the coalition forces. However, I wouldn't have been able to descend more than 2~3 floors alone......'

That's what Ark was thinking. Then he suddenly felt a pain as both his wrists throbbed.

"Eh? This pain is?"

Ark was familiar with the pain so he pulled up his sleeves and checked his wrist. As expected, light was coming from both his tattoos. When particular conditions were satisfied, another seal of Eternal Soul would be released! The tattoos there were enveloped in light cracked and seemed to break. Then the tattoo sank into his skin and the information window appeared.

-A seal of 'Eternal Soul' has been released and you've acquired a new profession-specific skill. -[Demonic Response III]: Eternal Soul stage 5 (Passive)

'Demonic Response' is a necessary stage to learn if they want to reach the enlightenment needed for Eternal Soul. When you find a demonic response, you will deal 30% additional damage against demonic monsters and the probability of resisting the demonic attribute will increase by 40%. In addition, you will be able to detect hidden demonic power within the bodies of monsters.

-[Demonic Manifestations]: Eternal Soul stage 6 (Active)

'Demonic Manifestations' is a skill which corresponds to the intermediate level of Eternal Soul. While Demonic Seal and Demonic Response were basic techniques, this skill is an intermediate level skill to prepare for war against the demonic monsters.

Magic Manifestations is a technique used to give special powers to your allies. 5 items created with Demonic Seal are automatically sacrificed when Demonic Manifestation is used. The manifested effect depends on the type of equipment offered. In addition, the effect will change depending on the combination of equipment offered. It will be possible to know the active effect by looking at your allies. However, the sacrificed items will be destroyed when the effect disappears.

He hadn't considered that Eternal Soul would awaken. But it wasn't strange since the Abyss monsters had the demonic attribute. The problem was he couldn't see why the soul was released.

'Vega wasn't the first demonic boss I met in the Abyss. The 53rd floor? Wasn't there a boss with the demonic attribute? So why is the seal released now and not at that time?'

At first he thought it was unsealed when he fought bosses with the demonic attribute. But that wasn't the case this time.

'Oh that reminds me, doesn't the explanation for Demonic Response say that certain conditions had to be met for Eternal Soul to be unsealed? Then I must've met that condition while fighting Vega.....'

Ark read the information window for a while and was soon able to discover the answer. The new skill was equivalent to Eternal Soul reaching an intermediate level. And the intermediate skill was to prepare for a war against the demonic forces.

'Then I needed to kill a certain number of demonic monsters to unlock this?'

When thinking about it, the reason for the unsealing was clear. The boss on the 53rd floor also had subordinates but there were only 50 of them. The subordinates also weren't of the demonic attribute. However Vega had led the 1,000 lizards. The number was enough to be called an attack corps.

'The intermediate process for Eternal Soul is to fight against the demonic corps. Then how many will I have to kill to unlock the other seals? It is become increasingly more difficult.'

He knew learning Hero Maban's legacy wouldn't be easy. But fighting against an army of demonic monsters was quite a difficult condition. Frankly, he had no idea where to find another corps after clearing the secret dungeon.

'Well, finding the demonic corps isn't the only difficult part. Won't I also need an attack group if I have to fight against an army? If I think about it, it really is a difficult condition. Well, leaving that problem for the future.....Demonic Manifestations.....the cursed items will be automatically offered and a special effect granted?'

While Demonic Seal would be used to created cursed japtem, he never really used Demonic Response. But according to the information window, Eternal Soul had reached an intermediate level. In other words, Demonic Seal was a skill that should be used in conjunction with Demonic Manifestations.

'A fairly useable skill has appeared now that Eternal Soul has reached intermediate.....although it does consume 5 equipment. I don't know what kind of effect it gives but I'll have to try it. Well, a time to test it will appear.'

Ark thought before dismissing thoughts of Eternal Soul. Right now it was important to finish capturing the secret dungeon. After the battle with Vega only 120 troops remained. Honestly, he couldn't guarantee how many would survive if they had to go down even more floors. But he had no intention of just leaving after reaching this point.

'I have to go as far as possible!'