

Ark Vol 21 C 1

Chapter 1

ACT 1 Crusade and Money

Buzz, buzz, the whole street and squares erupted with noise. From the north, south, east and west, it occurred all over the continent. Places where users gathered all over the continent were stirring.

“Dammit, I really feel like cursing. Are they playing a joke right now?”

“That’s right, this is really ridiculous. We’ve been hunting level 200 monsters when suddenly level 300 elite monsters appeared around town? I lost 50% of my health with one hit!”

“If I hunt then I’m dead. How can I leave the village when I die as soon as I exit?”

“I’ve already died three times from the monsters camped in front of the village. My stats decreased by 18 points and I had to spend 50 gold on repairs. I could also only play the game for 20 minutes within three days.”

“I’d rather die a few times. I spent three days suffering on this quest only to find out that the NPC has died so I can’t complete it. Damn, I heard the quest gave good armour so I stayed all night for several days to complete it. I did all that work for nothing!”

The users gathered on the street and clamoured away. The cause of this was because of the appearance of the black obelisk. It was an unidentified object which caused fear in the NPCs of New World. However the obelisk didn’t only have an effect on the NPCs. No, in a sense the users were in an even more unbearable situation than the NPCs. Despite a virtual reality game having a high degree of freedom, the users still had to sequentially attack the enemy relative to their level. It was like a novice user starting the game with a rusted dagger only to encounter a level 999 boss outside of town. How could they kill it? It was like treading on something before it could sprout! But this absurd situation occurred in New World thanks to the appearance of the obelisks. Mobs of level 100 users appeared around novice villages and attacked, making a mess of the hunting grounds and the village. Several villages that had been raided by monsters became ruins.

The situation calmed down a bit when troops from the Lord of each region arrived. The troops protected the villages and even destroyed the scattered obelisks as they approached. Fortunately, the situation that had suddenly deteriorated calmed to a certain extent..... The users problem started then. The obelisks near the villages were destroyed but the fundamental problem wasn't resolved. The power of the curse had already permeated deeply into the earth so the obelisks were just restored and the suspicious monsters didn't really decrease.

In this situation, the most important thing to the NPCs was protecting their territory. It was the area the NPCs lived in. In other words, the users area was different. The obelisk appeared in the hunting ground so the monsters became a lot stronger. As soon as the users left the village, it really felt like they met a level 999 boss monster. Naturally the users' dissatisfaction would run out of control. And all of the users' complaints were aimed towards Global Exos.

"What on earth are the operators doing?"

"I paused my part time job for a few days only to keep dying!"

"We can't even go outside at the moment!"

"Are you trying to make us stop playing the game?"

"I don't even get any replies to my emails."

"This is a tyranny!"

"If it continues then I'll launch legal action against Global Exos!"

It was why their customer service and New World's home page was paralyzed. Since they had to wait to lodge their complaints, the users' dissatisfaction amplified even more. Just as the dissatisfaction reached a boiling point and the users were about to become an angry mob, a new variable appeared. An unexpected information window appeared in front of all the users.

-The Expedition Army's Crusade (Event Quest)

Suddenly enigmatic black obelisks and unidentified monsters have appeared around the continent. A black fog and dark existences have covered the Sinus Principality.....

Currently this unlucky and confusing situation is continuing on the continent. However, this is merely the tip of the iceberg. Many prophets have warned that this is only the start of the incidents and if this continues then the worse situation will cover the continent. So the leaders of this society has decided on a crusade to defend the truth and peace.

This is a message sent to all species on the continent. It doesn't matter whether you are brave warriors with hearts of steel or saints who preach the divine will! Join the crusade and protect the future of the continent!

"The Expedition army's crusade?"

The entire continent was enveloped in silence. While the users were still understanding the situation.

"Hey, look at the TV!"

"Global Exos is making an official announcement about this event!"

The users focused their eyes on a press conference that Global Exos was holding. Five days after the situation started, Ha Myung-woo appeared on the TV.

"First I wanted to apologize for the inconvenience to the users."

Ha Myung-woo started eloquently. Then a moderator asked questions to make the interview proceed.

"Many users are asking for clarification about the situation that occurred in New World five days ago. Can we understand the reason why it took so long?"

"I'm also sorry about that point. We didn't mean to ignore the users but we couldn't explain until now. It is in order to provide a more interesting game for the users."

"A more interesting game.....?"

"This situation is a top secret project that our company has been planning for a long time. As you already know, it has been two years since New World started so we believe that new events are essential for the players that love New World. This is the event we came up with, were the users would join forces with the NPCs to save the continent. This event will be an opportunity for users to fall in love with New World even more."

"Instead of solving quests they received through listening to a NPC's concerns, it has evolved into resolving the issues of NPCs experiencing hardship."

"That's right."

Ha Myung-woo answered with a confident expression.

"I can't explain in detail but users who have checked the quest contents will probably understand the general outline. Since this concerns the fate of the whole continent, the compensation for this quest can't be compared to others. However, this event is intended to reward users for the support they have given so Global Exos has also prepared some unprecedented prizes."

"That sounds quite interesting? What type of prizes will they be?"

"First, this quest is huge with the expedition forces from Schudenberg and Bristania heading towards the Sinus Principality. The two users who occupy the no. 1 ranking in achievements from both forces will each be paid 500 million won."

"5-500 million won?"

“Yes, and the two who get 2nd place will receive 300 million won and 3rd place will receive 100 million won. In addition, 4th place to 100th place will receive a cash prize of 20 million won. Users from the ranks 101~200 will be able to play New World for free for one year. Users up to the 1000th place will have a souvenir sent to them. The total prize money for this event is 10 billion won.”

“It is a truly unprecedented event. If you achieve the number 1 ranking in public achievements during the game then the rewards would be more than expected. But doesn't that mean it is more advantageous for users with a high level? High level users will definitely have the chance to get more achievements.”

“Of course we've also talked about that. And we've decided to have a separate prize regardless of ranking or achievement.”

“Regardless of rank or achievement.....?”

“In fact, we're looking at the 'impact' of the event on New World. That 'something' is the core of this event. The target of this event is the user who obtains that 'something.' The person who receives this prize will get 1 billion won and the position of Global Exos honorary advisor. That 'something' might be a monster or something belonging to a user working with the enemy. In other words, it 100% depends on luck.

“Amazing. But aren't only users higher than level 250 allowed to participate in this event? New World started more than 2 years ago but there aren't many users over level 250. Won't users who aren't over level 250 feel deprived because they can't participate in the event?”

“Other online games might have events for all users but we think slightly differently. New users are important but ignoring those who have given a lot to New World isn't possible.”

“The marketing of online games really is different these days.”

“Oh, please don't misunderstand. It isn't our intention to disregard new users. While the event is proceeding, the users with levels lower than 250 will still experience some problems. So when this event ends, we also planned a new event for users less than level 250.”

This was the response that Global Exos came up with. In fact, Global Exos had only come up with this plan a few hours ago. A large number of programmers and candidates had been mobilized to solve this problem but it was still an inner problem. It wasn't something that could be announced to the public. Therefore the users had been on the verge of exploding. Then an unexpected Event Quest was triggered. Ha Myung-woo thought fiercely and combined all the circumstances with the event quest. This situation was presented as a project for the users. In addition, it was a chance to naturally get their hands on the master code. Anyway, Ha Myung-woo's plan succeeded. The users didn't know about the inner problems and just believed Ha Myung-woo's words.

"I see, it was somewhat strange!"

"This atmosphere was created to arrange the event."

"If I get first place in achievements then apart from the quest compensation, I can also get 500 million won!"

"If we find the hidden 'something' then we can get 1 billion won!"

Since they could gather equipment and cash in reality at the same time, the users flocked to join the expedition force. In just one day, 40,000 users joined the Schudenberg Kingdom's expedition. There were also the 20,000 elite knights from the Schudenberg Kingdom! An expedition army of 60,000 troops were suddenly made. And there was one person behind them who was smiling complacently.....

The person with money in his eyes was Ark. Ark knew about the expedition before the event quest was triggered. It was 100% but he also knew details about the compensation thanks to participating in the meeting. The quest was ranked S++ difficult so the compensation wasn't a joke. The top ranking achievements received a rare title, a higher rank if they were already nobility and unique equipment. But was that all? Apart from the in game rewards, there was also a separate cash prize in reality. Normally Ark would've jumped on the opportunity. However this time was different. It wasn't the event quest rewards or Global Exos' prizes that was reflected in his eyes. The reason is that Ark was already in the expedition and he had secured the biggest rights.

'Now all the NPCs and users in the expedition are my customers!'

That's right. Ark had managed to secure the exclusive right to provide munitions for the expedition force. That was 60,000 customers!

'Even if each person pays 5 gold, that is at least 300,000 gold!'

300,000 gold! When calculating into money, it was the huge amount of 3 billion won. Rather than beating thousands of people to get the number 1 ranking, it was better to obtain the more exclusive trading rights. Wasn't it natural that the quest compensation and event cash prize wasn't reflected in his eyes?

'I've finally hit the jackpot! 3 billion won..... No, it didn't even matter if it was 1.5 billion won. To receive this kind of money..... I can buy a house, a car and put extra money into the deposit so I can live and eat!'

Ark had a rosy dream for his future like someone who won the lottery.

'Hahaha, war is indeed money!'

However, there were also a part that Ark was a little worried about. Ark had managed to obtain the exclusive rights to the supplies from Haverstein, but it was thanks to the arrangement between Marquis Halben and Marquis Daltin. So it was like Ark was supported by 60% of the nobles, but the 40% belonging to Duke Sarkin were different. Anyway, the King had already chosen Haverstein as the commander. Therefore Duke Sarkin couldn't say anything else about it. But Duke Sarkin could rally his faction to oppose Ark's appointment as the exclusive supplier of the munitions. There was no way he could leave the military supplies to Ark who wasn't even a professional merchant.

'Well, I'm being supported by Marquis Halben and Marquis Daltin so hopefully a problem won't occur.....'

When considering Duke Sarkin's power, it was impossible to not be anxious. Moreover, the monopoly supply didn't just have a few silvers hanging on it. It was an ideal chance to earn hundreds of thousands of gold in the next few months! If any issues appeared.....

So Ark was keenly aware of the movement of Duke Sarkin's faction. But the problem came from a direction he never expected.

"Lord Ark."

After organizing the troops in the expedition, Viscount Haverstein had visited Ark.

"I've been so busy with the applicants that we haven't had a chance to talk properly. Are your preparations going well? If it's you then I think it will be fine."

'My work? Did I have to do something? Is he just asking if I've prepared well?'

Ark formed a hasty conclusion and answered without thinking.

"Yes, there aren't any problems. Everything is ready for when the expedition leaves."

"I thought so."

Haverstein nodded. Then he spoke with a slightly embarrassed expression.

"I was a little worried since this is the first time you've been in charge of munitions supply..... This is also the first time I've organized troops on such a large scale. So I'm relieved that you're well prepared."

Haverstein thought for a while before speaking again.

"In fact, the one normally in charge of the military's munitions supply is the famous Nadin. Moreover, he is a person under Duke Sarkin's influence."

"Duke Sarkin?"

Wariness crept into Ark's eyes. Then Haverstein added like he wasn't worried.

"But Nadin isn't the person with the position. If you've processed the goods without any trouble then it won't be bad. You can go discuss with Nadin about any future work regarding munitions."

".....I understand."

Ark parted from Haverstein with an uncomfortable feeling. He had an ominous feeling after hearing Haverstein's words. In this world there were many people whose unlucky premonitions had a high chance of coming true.

"Are you Sir Ark who is in charge of munitions supply to the expedition army?"

A testy old voice spoke as he entered the office. Old people were some of the most stubborn people. Yet in the future he would have to deal with this old man regarding hundred thousands of gold. Ark pasted the smile he developed for business and greeted politely.

"Yes, I am Ark. Greetings and sorry for the delay....."

"I don't care about your greetings."

Nadin interrupted coldly and threw him a scroll.

'What the? This scroll..... Heok!'

Ark's mouth open absent-mindedly as he read the scroll.

-Expedition Army's Order of Munitions (Client: Viscount Nadin)

Leather: 4,000 pieces

Food: 100 tons

Steel Ingots: 200 tons

Wrought Iron Ingots: 200 tons

Wood: 200 tons.....

The scroll was the purchase order for the munitions. Ark wasn't surprised by receiving the order. However, the problem was the quantities! It was natural considering the 60,000 people in the expedition army but the quantities were a lot more than Ark expected.

"The expedition army was formed faster than expected so the time has accelerated and I need it within the next 3 days. Then please deliver the resources written there immediately.

Nadin said and gestured for him to leave.

"B-but....."

"What is it?"

"To supply these amounts in three days....."

Ark stuttered with a puzzled expression. Nadine looked at his nervous form, frowned and declared sharply.

"You can't do it?"

“No, it’s not that.....”

“Okay, then I will speak honestly. I’m not very happy with your appointment. I don’t like how you got the exclusive trading rights because Lord Haverstein was appointed commander. But my dislike is separate from your abilities. If you have the ability to supply that amount then I won’t say anything.”

Nadin narrowed his eyes and continued.

“Then I’ll go back to the general principles. Do you have the necessary skills required to be in charge of the military supplies? It is simple. You need to be ready with the necessary military supplies at any time. That’s it. You’ll be able to receive quite a bit of profit. In other words, if you want to obtain profit then you need to have at least the minimum prepared. Do you think a person who isn’t prepared has any right to obtain a profit?”

Nadin’s words made sense. Of course, the one hiding behind him was Duke Sarkin. The military expedition had 60,000 people so he could roughly guess the amount of supplies required. Yet Nadin required the order within 3 days. It was a way of protesting Haverstein’s appointment of Ark to the position. If Ark didn’t supply it then it was the same as admitting that he had no ability.

That’s right. Nadin was trying to make Ark fail. But Ark couldn’t say anything to Nadin. Nadin’s aim was clearly Ark’s failure. Of course, after receiving the rights Ark had made a plan to secure the resources. But while dreaming of his lottery win, he hadn’t considered two things. The first was that the expedition would gather 60,000 people so quickly. And the second was that the initial resources needed for the early stages was different than what he thought. So he hadn’t secured the necessary basic military supplies.

‘This is due to my lack of experience but I can’t tell anyone else.’

If he admitted his lack of experience then he would lose the exclusive trading rights.

“.....I understand. I will quickly secure the maximum quantities.”

Ark had no choice but to say this and leave Nadin’s office.

'This is only the first order and I have to supply those required amounts. If I'm deprived of the rights then it will likely be changed to another business with the required supplies. That is probably Nadine's purpose. But if I succeed then I will definitely have the exclusive rights to supply the munitions. Yes, this might actually be an opportunity!'

Ark decided to think about it positively. In fact, Ark had prepared some subcontractors to supply him with the necessary goods. Weapons, armours, necessary materials and tools were contracted from the raccoons in the Underground World while the Baran clan in Seutandal provided food and various other supplies. Ark used the Sacred Branch from the world trees to check the situation in those places and he was able to get the goods for a cheaper price.

'I have to scrape as much items as possible from those two places!'

Ark immediately contacted the Underground World and Seutandal using the Sacred Branch. And he confirmed the amount of resources in the store. But even if he scraped all the resources, he could only gather 60% of the required amounts. Even if he made the production lines operate at full strength for the next three days, he would only be able to fill 70%. His concerns were becoming a reality.

"It's really crazy, if I had 10 days then I could secure the required amount..... But I can't tell the expedition that they need to wait for their supplies....."

Ark scratched his head and sighed before muttering.

".....Is that the only way?"

In fact, Ark had a solution to this problem from the beginning. Ark still had 20,000 gold from his investment funds and combined with the 25,000 gold worth of goods he embezzled from the merchant's guild, he had 45,000 gold. He could use those funds to buy the remaining 30% from other stores throughout the kingdom. However, Ark couldn't make that decision easily.

"With my exclusive subcontractors I can receive the goods for 70% of the price....."

.....That was the problem. Ark's top priority was to obtain the necessary military supplies. There was no room to consider other problems. It wasn't just Ark aiming for the exclusive rights to supply the

expedition. Several aristocrats associated with Sarkin, Daltin and Halben were also aiming for it. They weren't any competition because they couldn't supply it at a cheaper price than Ark. It was a price at 70% of the market price.

"Since it is mainly products from the raccoon clan, I can purchase the items with a 30~40% discount. So even if I supply the goods to the expedition force with a 30% discount, I can still get a 5% profit. With this amount of supplies, a 5% profit is still a huge amount."

That was Ark's calculations. But if he bought the goods from other places, he would have to buy it at 100% of the price and deliver the goods at 70% of the price. It meant there would be a 30% loss from the remaining 30% goods. So Ark would get a 5% profit from 70% of the goods while he would receive a 30% loss from the remaining 30% of the supplies. If that happened then he would get a deficit of 5.5%.

"If the supplies cost 700,000 gold and there is a 5.5% deficit then doesn't that mean 38,500 gold is lost?"

Ark's face darkened at the thought. 38,500 gold! It was an enormous amount of money that would be taken away before he even started engaging in business. Even if he maintained the monopoly on military supplies from now on, there was no guarantee that he could recoup the loss. If the war lengthened and a lot of military supplies were needed then he could. But if the war ended quickly then he wouldn't be able to recoup the loss.

However.....Anyway, he had to pay the price for the amount of supplies he gathered from Seutandal and the Underground World. Even if he lost thousands of gold, he still needed the exclusive trading rights. If he lost the right then he would be ruined either way. Whether it was rice or porridge, he had no choice but to go to the end..... Still, to just lose close to 40,000 gold.....!

Ark sighed and squeezed his head.

"Ark-nim!"

Suddenly the door opened and Sid came running in.

"What? Can't you see I'm busy now?"

Ark's nerves were sensitive so he became annoyed easily. Then Sid murmured with a despondent look.

"But it is an urgent matter....."

"What is it?"

"The goods we earlier salvaged from the sea. Then martial law was declared so I left it in a rented warehouse in Reuben."

"What about it?"

"The owner of that warehouse contacted me just now. He raised the warehouse rent by 50%....."

"What is that?"

Ark jumped and shouted. He already foresaw a loss of approximately 40,000 gold so his nerves were stretched thin. Sid was shocked and responded in a timid voice.

"That is..... You know that trade is impossible these days thanks to the martial law. In such a situation, it is also impossible to buy things from stores. Hunting isn't comfortable anymore so users aren't buying or selling things. So a lot of merchants are depositing goods in warehouses, causing the rent to rise....."

"Damn! This is the thanks I get for using that guy's warehouse? That fellow really....."

Ark shouted until he abruptly shut his mouth.

'Wait? Trade is prohibited so there are a lot of goods in the warehouse?'

Those words stuck in his head. After thinking for a while, Ark's face brightened.

“Well done Sid! Follow me!”

“Huh? Huh?”

Sid was pulled along by Ark with a bewildered expression.

‘Huhuhu, as I expected.’

Ark smiled as he looked around the tavern. Ark was currently in the tavern ‘Gold Mountain’ in the merchant city of Giran. Gold Mountain had cheap and delicious food so there were usually a lot of guests. However, over the last few days it had more guests than usual. The seats were tightly packed together and some people were even standing and eating. The reason that tavern was bustling could easily be guessed from the conversation of the guests.

“This is really ridiculous!”

“If commercial trade is banned then what will happen to the merchants?”

“What is with that ridiculous law?”

The merchants gathered in groups of two or three and muttered resentfully into their wine cups. The reason they were indignant was because of the martial law declared not long ago.

-The Schudenberg King’s Emergency Martial Law!

Thanks to the unsavoury events occurring in the Schudenberg Kingdom, the King and aristocrats have declared an emergency martial law. The martial law for Schudenberg Kingdom will last until the cause is determined and resolved.

* Under the martial law, all checkpoints are temporarily closed.

* Under the martial law, all quests and mission requests will be stopped.

* Under the martial law, permission from the government offices is required in order to trade.

* Under the martial law, acts of hostility are prohibited outside hunting grounds.

The laws which prohibited all foreign activities had been decided in the aristocrat meeting. Well, the NPCs easily accepted those laws but the users' complaints continued infinitely. They couldn't do anything even if they connected to the game. In particular, the ones that suffered a fatal blow from the martial law were the merchants. Although the checkpoints were closed, it was still possible to go outside and hunt. Even if some of them wanted to participate in the expedition, their levels were too low. However, trade was prohibited so there was nothing the merchants could do. In other words, thousands of New World's merchants were unemployed because of the martial law.

"I spent quite a bit on goods from the production district but now it isn't possible to sell it....."

"Even with running a street stall, I can barely sell any potions."

"I only sold one scroll today."

The merchants sighed and complained. Most merchants bought things from another region and then sold it to general stores or the merchant's guild. Yet they couldn't do anything about those goods because of the martial law. Usually they could see to the users but thanks to the black obelisks, the number of people hunting had decreased. Furthermore, the warriors in the expedition force were quite high levelled so there was no reason for them to spend money on consumables. Therefore several unfavourable news piled on top of each other on the merchants. Thus the unemployed merchants gathered at the tavern to express their dissatisfaction.

"Ohhh, it's the end for me after a couple of days!"

One trade muttered with his head in his hands.

“I was trying to grab a share of the iron ores so I collected a 1,000 gold credit note from the merchant’s guild. The atmosphere had been restless these days so I thought the price of weaponry would increase. However, now there is a martial law? If I can’t obtain 1,000 gold by the time the credit note is due in two days then I’m bankrupt!”

“It is the same for me. The monsters are weird these dates so I got a credit not for a bunch of potions.”

.....That was the problem. When commercial activities were banned under the martial law, the NPCs would discontinue buying and selling goods. So the merchants in the tavern who suffered the most damage were the ones with credit notes. If a merchant with a small capital wanted to obtain the maximum profit from long distance trade, they would often obtain a credit note from the merchant’s guild. But now they couldn’t dispose of the times they bought.

Credit collection by moneylenders were horrifying whether it was in the game or reality! Under the martial law, they wouldn’t be able to pay back the credit note in time. A merchant who had a bad credit rating would receive a huge penalty and have their stats decreased. So merchants feared credit collection the most. And because of the martial law, those merchants had a lot of goods piled up in their warehouses.

“Ah, is there anybody here who would like to buy my goods?”

The cornered merchants desperately asked for someone’s help. Suddenly, somebody appeared like a ray of light to help them.....

“I need several of those things. I will purchase these items if the price is right.”

The person who said that was Ark. All of the merchant’s in the tavern focused their eyes on Ark.

“Huh? You want to buy some goods?”

“Uh, what kind of things do you want to buy?”

“Well, a few things. Steel ingots, wrought iron ingots, sheet metal, wood, paper, blade sharpener, etc..... If you have any of this things then I will purchase regardless of the quantity.”

The merchant's lit up at Ark's words. But the bright faces of the merchants soon turned dark again.

“However, the purchase price has to be 60% of the average market price.”

“6-60%?”

“Are you crazy?”

“We used a variety of skills to travel to the mountains to buy the goods are 75% of the market price. So if we sell to you then won't we receive a 15% loss?”

The merchants muttered with an absurd expression. Ark just lifted an eyebrow and placed a bulging pouch of money on the table before speaking.

“You can tell me to go. I won't force you to sell it to me. I will only purchase these items for 60% of the market price.”

Ark folded his arms and closed his eyes like he had no interest in the merchants' reactions. The merchants closed their mouths and studied each other's faces.

‘Huhuhu, they can't sell it and they can't hold on to it.’

Ark inwardly smiled as he noticed the atmosphere. A lot of merchants with goods in the warehouse would choose to wait until the martial law ended. But the merchants who lacked the capital needed to pay back their loan needed someone to buy their things. Their entire fortune was poured into the goods so they wouldn't be able to pay the rental fee for the warehouse or be able to pay off their loan. If they didn't pay their loan in a timely matter then there would be an extravagant penalty and they would become bankrupt.

‘Right now those merchants don’t need a lot of profit but to pay off their credit note.’ Just like what happened to Sid previously, it became much harder to make a profit from gold if they were bankrupt. The higher the level, the harder it became. If they couldn’t pay off the loan then they would receive thousands of gold in damages. But it wasn’t easy to sell the goods right now. ‘Shall I give it a slight push?’

Ark then sighed and stood up.

“I guess no one wants to trade. Then.....”

As expected, the merchants flinched and hurriedly opened their mouths.

“W-wait a minute!”

“Huh? Why?”

“You’re really going to act this way? A deal like this..... We need to get other opinions first.....”

“I’m sorry but I don’t have a lot of time. I need to meet other people as well..... If I manage to purchase it from different merchants then I won’t need these things anymore.”

Ark answered. But deep down his heart was anxious. The martial law was announced around the same time as the was. In other words, they were still coping with the situation. The situation was so sudden that most users didn’t understand correctly. If this situation continued for several more days then users would gradually start to cope with it.

‘The people who move quickly will benefit the most.’

That’s right. A lot of merchants were gathered in the tavern to complain. The ones who engaged in business with a credit note were in a difficult situation. However, the targets with some funding ability were different. Just like Ark, they used this situation to purchase goods from the merchants cheaply and

then they would receive a lot of profit when the martial law ended. No, some users were already starting this type of business in Selebrid.

‘My purpose is to buy things for 30% cheaper than the market price. But if another person like that appears then it will become a price competition. This is the only chance I have to get it for 70% of the market price!’

So Ark needed to somehow negotiate with the merchants. Of course he couldn’t act too quickly.

“If it is 60%, our losses..... It should be a minimum of 70%.....”

Fortunately, the merchants were increasingly following Ark’s pace.

‘I did it!’

Ark inwardly laughed as he heard the merchant’s words. Ark was contracted to supply the expedition force at 70% of the market price. He wouldn’t receive any damages.

“Sheesh, I’m going to stop. That guy’s goal is obvious. He wants to buy things now and then sell it for a more expensive price when the martial law is over. I’d rather word hard to pay off my debt then sell it to someone like him!”

A merchant suddenly said and spat on the floor.

‘T-that bastard.....!’

Ark felt his heart fall at the merchant’s words. Atmosphere was important in business like this. So the merchant’s words made his anxious. The atmosphere that he had spent a while creating was broken. The merchants who were prepared to sell for 70% studied each other and backed off.

‘Damn, what do I do? Do I have to compromise with 75%?’

Ark became more impatient now that the atmosphere was broken. But if he showed a weak point then his deal would be ruined. A merchant was still a merchant. If he showed weakness then the merchants would become aware and raise the price.

‘Should I abandon this one and try again at another tavern?’

Just as Ark was thinking this.

“Wait a minute!”

A small merchant wearing a hood exclaimed from a corner of the tavern. He hesitated for a while before sighing and speaking.

“Did you say 60%? It is difficult but my situation is urgent. However, 65% is the lowest I can sell my goods for.”

“Eh?”

The other merchants were shocked by those words. Then the merchant shook his head with an irritated expression.

“Damn, do I have to give up my pride? I need 3,000 gold by tomorrow. Even if the martial law is stopped, it is no use if I have no credit and become bankrupt. Even if I have to sell it at a loss, 1 gold is better than nothing. It is 100 times better than paying the penalty.”

The merchant spoke in an angry voice before approaching Ark.

“You said you wanted steel ingots? I have about 10 tons.”

Ark nodded after hearing the merchant’s words.

“10 tons? That is quite a lot. If it is that much then I don’t need any more steel ingots. You’re willing to sell it for 65% of the market price? Since you’re selling me that much volume, I will raise it to 67%.”

“Thank you, but honestly 67% doesn’t make me feel better. However it can’t be helped. It will be too late if I sell it later.”

The small merchant sighed. But the other merchants became even more desperate. The small merchant possessed steel ingots. Since the small merchant took the initiative first, they were deprived at the chance to sell for 65%. And the other merchants were sensitive to the atmosphere. The fact that Ark bought the whole quantity meant there were less items he required. If they missed the opportunity then they would be unable to pay off the credit note, would receive a penalty and then become bankrupt. Furthermore, the small merchant also left a bold impression. The emotional merchants who were on the brink of collapse quickly rushed over.

“You said you needed wrought iron ingots? I have 1 ton!”

“I have 70 pieces of leather!”

“We have 10 tons of sheet metal altogether so will you also give us 67%?”

Therefore Ark could buy all the items from the merchants at 65% of the market price.

“Huhuhu, merchants are so simple.....”

After a while, Ark laughed as he exited the tavern. Then someone popped out from the alley near the tavern. It was the small merchant from the tavern.

“Ark-nim, did I do okay?”

The small merchant took off his hood and his face was revealed. A hobbit merchant..... He was Sid who Ark had infiltrate the tavern in advance.

“Huhuhu, you did well.”

Ark grinned and nodded. That’s right. Everything that happened in the tavern was according to Ark’s plan. It was difficult for a person to sell if it meant a loss, even if they had difficult circumstance. But if they saw someone suffer a loss first then the situation would change. It was human nature to follow along with others once someone did something first. So Ark had Sid infiltrate the tavern beforehand to play this role.

“Good. Now I’ve received approximately 80% of the quantity. I have to go to all the taverns in Giran before the rumours spread!”

“You will give me the separate 1% fee as promised?”

“I will give it once I get all 100%.”

“Then I will trust you.”

So the two con artists started looking for another tavern. After visiting 5 taverns, he was finally able to obtain the necessary amount of goods. And the purchase price was 65% of the market price. He was handing it to the expedition for 70% of the price so he could get a 5% profit.

Meanwhile, the merchants in Giran were shedding tears of blood.....

“Hrrm, you did it. You’ve obtained the required resources in three days. Frankly, I had been a little dissatisfied about Haverstein appointing you for this position..... You have the ability. Okay, I look forward to working with you in the future.”

Since Ark unexpectedly finished the job, Nadin couldn’t say anything else. Nadine reluctantly settled the bill for the military supplies. The price for all the materials delivered was 700,000 gold! Ark received 5% of the profit so that was 35,000 gold in one transaction. However, the bill for the military supplies wasn’t paid in cash. It was military currency..... It was a type of war credit that the kingdom issued in this

emergency situation. It couldn't be turned into cash but the raccoons and Baran clan were satisfied with the military currency so it wasn't a big problem.

'Anyway, I had a difficult time because of this but I also learnt a few things.'

Ark realized something thanks to Nadine and the Duke's plan. Supplying munitions wasn't just buying and providing goods. In order to accomplish his role as the exclusive supplier, he always needed to have abundant goods and a secure route to move them.

"A huge amount of military supplies is required that will cost at least tens of thousands of gold. If the goods are stolen by monsters on the way then it won't just be a monetary loss. There is a possibility that Ark's Corporation will be ruined."

That's right. Currently there was an exclusive contract between the Schudenberg Kingdom and Ark's Corporation. If he couldn't supply the goods by the due date and damage was caused to the expedition then he would have to pay a huge fine for the breach of contract. In addition, Nadine and Duke Sarkin might cause more problems. Duke Sarkin might even obstruct his operations.

"Even without Duke Sarkin's interference, there are the black obelisks everywhere. I need to secure a safe method to move supplies from now on! In retrospect, it is lucky that there is a martial law right now."

Thanks to the martial law, there was no sieges in Nagaran at the moment. Since siege warfare was discontinued, there was no reason to keep the coalition forces at Silvana. Therefore Ark mobilized 2,000 members of Dark Eden along with JusticeMan and the rehabilitation members to escort the military supplies from Seutandal and the Underground World. Despite having 3,800 people, he only mobilized 2,000 to rotate the guards.

"Many alliances are participating in this expedition as it is an opportunity to gain a lot of levels. If I mobilize all the troops in Dark Eden for the escort task then the difference with other alliance might become even bigger after the war ends. So while some people are doing the escort task, the other will train in the secret dungeon to raise their levels."

It was something he decided after thinking carefully. Despite the benefits from the war, he also had to think about protecting Silvana. So Ark made the remaining 1,800 troops remain as the guard unit for the

residents of Silvana. Despite previously clearing the dungeon, the NPCs in the coalition were still relatively low levelled. Since Ark had reduced the monsters in the secret dungeon, he directed the NPCs to raise their level. Since the levels of the NPCs were important to the coalition, the users would have to protect the NPCs while raising their levels together.

“Now I’ve arranged the situation.”

One full day had passed while he was arranging everything. Securing and moving the goods from the Underground World and Seutandal, dealing with the contract, assigning the guards from the coalition forces, sharing revenue, etc..... He needed to keep a close eye on the negotiations in order to determine if he received a profit or a loss. Since he caught the small problems, the situation was naturally arranged. Thus the 60,000 strong expedition force along with Ark started to march towards the Sinus Principality.

“Throw your chests out and walk proudly! We’re the soldiers on a crusade to save the continent!”

“Oohhhhh!”

At Haverstein’s words, the 60,000 soldiers lifted their swords and shouted. But to Ark the soldiers were just lumps of money.

‘Huhuhu, lumps of money! Yes, fight and give me more money!’

This wasn’t a crusade but a war of money for Ark.

While Ark was busy with various arrangements..... A large number of people had gathered in the backstreets of Giran. They were the merchant’s that had sold the goods to Ark for a loss in the tavern. Instead of shedding tears of blood, the merchants were smirking and laughing. The reason why was a small merchant standing in front of them.

“Now now! Collect the money.”

The merchants gathered around Sid who was holding a bag of money.

“2,000 gold.”

“Hmm, the fee is 3% so that is 60 gold. Thanks for the trouble.”

“Hehehe. Thank you, Sid-nim. Feel free to contact me anytime.”

The merchants collected the gold coins and left. Sid..... That’s right. Sid was the one holding the money bag in front of the merchants. But why was Sid giving money to the merchants? In order to solve that mystery, we need to go back a few days.

Ark who had participated in the meeting knew that martial law was going to be declared in Schudenberg. Ark thought he knew this information before most users but he miscalculated. Sid also received the information through Ark. While Ark was busy trying to secure the rights to the exclusive trading contract, Sid was making his own moves.

‘When martial law is proclaimed, trade will be stopped and merchants will have an overflow of goods that they can’t sell. If I persuade those merchants well then I’ll be able to buy those goods for half the price. If I buy it and leave it in a warehouse then I can get considerable profit later!’

That’s right. Sid had already devised that plan long before Ark did. While serving as the foreign division manager of the Continental Commerce Firm, he had accumulated a large number of staff in other areas.

‘Huhuhu. I am a merchant. I can get the same information 100 times faster than Ark.’

As soon as martial law was declared, Sid had bought the goods from the panicked merchants for 50% of the price. By the time Ark received the information in Selebrid, Sid had already bought the items from the merchants. However, a problem then occurred.

‘Damn, what is this? Isn’t this situation more serious than I expected?’

It was good that he had bought the items. But he soon realized that the war wasn't going to be resolved in a matter of days. The longer the war went on, the less profit Sid would receive and he might even receive a loss instead. The reason was the rent for the warehouses. If the war dragged on then the goods would have to stay in the warehouses for a longer time. After a certain period of time, the cost of the rent would exceed the profit margin.

'The rent also went up by 50% a while ago.'

It was why Sid was upset about the increase in rental fee. Apart from Ark's warehouse, in this situation Sid's warehouse was the one that would suffer a loss.

'I will be bankrupt after 1 month!'

Sid screamed as he saw the warehouse bill. Then Ark consulted with Sid about a plan to secure the necessary amount of munitions. A idea sparked in Sid's head.

'This is great! I can sell my items to this guy!'

But if he disclosed the situation to Ark that he would clearly buy the items for 50% of the price. So Sid had the crazy idea to hire merchants and arrange them around the taverns in order to sell his goods to Ark. That's right. Ark thought he had used Sid to deceive the merchants when in fact Sid had used the merchants to deceive Ark.

'Therefore the goods that I got for 50~60% of the price, I managed to sell to Ark for 65%. Even after giving the 5,000 gold fee to the merchants I hired, it is a profit of 10,000 gold! Moreover, there is separate 1% fee that I will get from Ark.....'

Sid laughed and muttered as he mentally calculated the profit.

"War is definitely money."

Sid was becoming more and more wicked like Ark.