

Ark Vol 22 C 1

Chapter 1

ACT 1 Descent of the Goddess

“Waaahhhh!”

Kwa kwa kwa kwang, kwa kwa kwa kwang!

The thick castle walls were nestled between high cliffs. An intense battle between monsters and humans was taking place in front of the castle wall. Monsters armed with thick leather, fangs and claws collided with warriors armed with armour, shields and swords. Meanwhile, the spells of the magicians and monsters clashed and shook the area filled with death. Chaos.....the tens of thousands fighting turned it into a chaotic battle. And the chaos also affected the headquarters.

“The Heavenly Knights unit on the right side has been isolated among the enemies!”

“The spear troops who have been supporting the Heavenly Knights have been caught by Tallons!”

“The 3rd defense battalion in the centre is being destroyed by a giant!”

“The 7th division commander is requesting wide area magic support!”

A bloody messenger reported the military situation in a breathless voice.

“Move the cavalry to the right to support the Heavenly Knights unit. Have the 11th reserve battalion move to the centre and built a defense line while rescuing the survivors. And we can’t grant the 7th division’s request at the moment. Presently the support magicians can’t be moved to that area. Have them retreat to the strategy area and join with the magician unit on the left side of the hill.”

“But the 7th division will find it difficult to retreat without the support of the magicians.”

“There are no units that are free right now!”

“.....I'll communicate the orders.”

The messenger sighed painfully and jumped back onto the battlefield. Haverstein also sighed as he looked at the disappearing messenger.

“The monsters are stubbornly resisting.”

Haverstein looked at the castle walls with the black fog floating around it. Right now Haverstein was leading the Schudenberg expedition while they were trying to invade Pabiun Fortress. Pabiun Fortress was blocking the only passage into the Sinus Principality from Schudenberg kingdom. Over the last 100 years, Pabiun Fortress never fell despite the repeated attacks from Schudenberg. It was the same even with Pabiun Fortress occupied by monsters. Despite the Schudenberg army having 30,000 troops, they hadn't been able to capture the fortress despite trying for 10 days. There were two significant reasons.

One reason already mentioned was that Pabiun Fortress was an impregnable fortress. And the second reason was the Black Obelisk Forest. Thanks to the Black Obelisk Forest, the monsters that died were resurrected after a scheduled amount of time passed. If the dead kept on being revived, it was the natural that the battle would come to a standstill. But a few days ago, the situation had worsened with the news that the Bristania expedition had already crossed the border and was marching towards Silrinad. If the Bristania expedition reached Silrinad first then they would become in charge. If control was taken away by the Bristania expedition then Haverstein would be divested of the commander position. Despite that, Haverstein couldn't attack aggressively. If the Black Obelisk Forest still existed then the expedition would only receive more damage by being reckless. Then a few hours ago Haverstein received some good news.

“Hik hik hik! O-operation.....success.....”

Racard had flown from the canyon and passed on the message while panting. After crossing through Smuggler's Pass, Ark had succeeded in the operation. The most troublesome problem was gone! Haverstein's voice immediately resounded through the camp.

“The problem that is blocking us is gone! The Black Obelisk Forest has been destroyed and the demonic monsters are in a state of confusion so this is the perfect chance to capture the Fortress!”

Haverstein rallied all the troops and headed to attack Pabiun Fortress. Just like Haverstein expected, the demonic monsters were rushing back and forth as the obelisk was blown up. They would be unable to respond properly to the expedition's attacks. Therefore the military expedition penetrated the canyon and reached Pabiun Fortress within a few hours.

"If we continue pressing like this then it will be possible to capture the fortress by the end of the day!"

For the first time in days, the expedition army was convinced of their victory and they cheered. Of course, the biggest challenge of the castle's walls still remained. But organization rather than numbers were needed in a siege. While the demons were more systematic than ordinary monsters, it wasn't to the extent that they could endure a siege. It was the reason why the demons left the fortress and battled in the canyon. On the other hand, the expedition members were familiar with sieges and had large weapons able to break the walls. Now that the black obelisks were destroyed, the number of demons couldn't be reinforced anymore. They were able to take advantage of the demons' confusion to penetrate the canyon and reach the fortress. At this point, the expedition army were already half way to victory. Yet they still had to cross a mountain in order to win.

"Commander-nim, they've appeared!"

A desperate voice was suddenly heard from the supporter's camp. Haverstein turned around and saw that huge monsters had appeared in front of Pabiun's gates. They were giant monsters 20 metres big with chains circling their body and holding a large pillar. Tension filled Haverstein's eyes.

".....Gripper!"

That's right. The Grippers! The mountain standing in the way of the expedition's victory was the Grippers. No, to be exact it was the Gripper's 'Earth Blast' skill! When the Gripper used Earth Blast, all monsters within 2 kilometres had their abilities increased by 50% while the soldiers had theirs reduced by 50%. For example, if the expedition and monsters were both level 100 then the 50% increase meant the monsters' abilities were equivalent to level 150. On the other hand, the expedition forces received a 50% penalty and were reduced to level 50. Therefore there was a 3 times difference in abilities. That difference was huge in a war. If it was used then the military situation would be instantly reversed. The expedition had failed to capture Pabiun Fortress many times because of the Gripper's Earth Blast.

'But this time the situation is different!'

“Armoured troops, all at the front gates with the large weapons!”

After receiving Haverstein’s order, the catapults and Fire Barrage Crossbows aimed towards the gates. Haverstein had discovered a weakness in the Gripper’s Earth Blast skill during the days spent trying to capture the fortress. It was that they needed a certain amount of space in order to use the skill. If there were any structures within the area of the skill then it would offset the impact through the earth and it wouldn’t work properly. The space required was approximately 100 metres. In other words, the Grippers needed to be 100 metres away from the fortress before they could use the skill.

So the Grippers had to go through the gates. This was the reason why Haverstein hurried towards Pabiun Fortress after receiving Racard’s message. If the Grippers went outside and scattered then it would be impossible to handle all of them. However, the situation changed if they were still exiting the fortress. They could intercept every Gripper when they exited the gates. So although the sacrifices weren’t small, Haverstein rushed to reach the fortress. He arranged the large weapons and made sure they were aimed at the gates. Their one objective was to intercept the Gripper.

“.....Launch!”

Tu tu tu tung, tu tu tu tung!

Hundreds of artillery flew across the battlefield at the Grippers. The Gripper who was exiting could barely take a few steps before kneeling down and becoming tattered.

-Kuaaaaah!

As soon as one collapsed, another Gripper exited through the gates. But the large weapons were already aimed at the gates!

“.....Launch!”

Tu tu tu tung, tu tu tu tung!

Large weapons fired again and clouds of dust appeared. When that repeated a few times, the bodies of dozens of Grippers were piled up like a mountain. Then another Gripper once again appeared in front of the gates.

“Lord, Lord, it’s the last one!”

Racard flew towards Haverstein’s head and exclaimed. Ark hadn’t unsummoned Racard.....Ark had also moved to Shangri-La so they couldn’t communicate wirelessly.....so he helped Haverstein using satellite mode. Anyway, if they dealt with one more then they didn’t need to worry about Earth Blast! After receiving Racard’s report, the last Gripper was hit by the crossbows and catapults.

Kwa kwa kwa kwang, kwa kwa kwa kwang!

“That’s it! Now all the obstacles in front of us are gone!”

After watching the explosion which occurred in front of the gates, Haverstein was convinced of their victory. The Earth Blast played a huge role so the monsters would become even more confused! But that sense of victory soon turned to shock.

“U-unbelievable.....!”

-Grrrrrrr.

The growl of the Gripper could be heard. The Gripper hadn’t died despite being hit by all those artillery.

“H-How on earth.....?”

Haverstein murmured with an incredulous voice.

Tuduk, tuduk, syu syu syu.....

Something suddenly emerged from the body of the Gripper. After seeing what it was, Haverstein could now understand the reason behind the Gripper's incredible defense. It was a demonic monster which emerged from the body of the Gripper. The tattered demon had arrows piercing it. That's right. Before the siege weapons had attacked, the Gripper had used the surrounding demonic monsters as armour. Therefore the Gripper managed to survive the hundreds of artillery shots.

"No way! Such a thing....."

"It takes 1 minute to charge the large weapons."

"We can't just wait until then. Magic and arrows is also fine. Just stop it!"

The expedition troops fired magic and arrows after receiving Haverstein's order. However, the response of the demons also couldn't be underestimated. Thanks to the demonic monsters creeping up the Gripper's body as armour, it was able to travel 100 metres. And the Gripper finally plunged the stone pillar into the ground.

-Kuaaaah!

The Gripper then roughly pulled out its heart. The Gripper's body exploded like a bomb and a huge shock wave spread in all directions. Then a hopeless information window floated in front of the expedition members.

-The Gripper has invoked the 'Earth Blast!'

The Gripper has sacrificed its life and used the huge stone pillar to spread the impact of the curse through the earth. Sacrificing its life will give a more powerful impact. Those who receive the impact will be deprived of their power and won't be able to oppose any more evil spirits. Those within 2 kilometres who receive the impact will take 24 hours to recover their power. Meanwhile, the evil curse will strengthen the demonic influence within 2 kilometres and the monsters will become stronger.

Duration: 24 hours>

“In the end.....!”

Haverstein’s face turned dark from the impact. Earth Blast was still used despite their efforts. Of course, the black obelisks were blown up so the Grippers couldn’t be revived anymore. The last Gripper had self-destructed to use Earth Blast. They could retire outside the 2 kilometres range of Earth Blast and wait until the skill ended before attacking again. However Haverstein couldn’t afford to do that now. The Bristania expedition had been advancing towards Silrinad for 3~4 days already. Even if the Schudenberg expedition managed to capture Pabiun Fortress, they still required 2~3 days to march towards Silrinad. In other words, it would be impossible for the Schudenberg expedition to catch up to the Bristania one if they couldn’t capture Pabiun Fortress within one day. They couldn’t afford to waste 24 hours. No, it wasn’t even easy to retreat. Haverstein had advanced to the front of the fortress because he was 100% confident that he could interrupt the Earth Blast. He hadn’t considered retreating at all so he developed a strategy where the troops just advanced. If he gave an order to retreat then it was possible the formations would collapse and the situation would worsen.

-Kuraka, kuraka, nohun! Arkra mojaham!

While Haverstein was hesitating, the demonic monsters started to flow out from the fortress. The first group that emerged were the Heavy Walkers that were 10 metres big. The Heavy Walker wore thick armour like the infantry and wielded a hammer.

“Heok! Stop those guys!”

The warriors at the front hurriedly raised their shields while getting into their defense formations. The Heavy Walker had a huge body and possessed tremendous attack power. But if the warriors were in a defensive formation then it was possible to thwart it to some degree. That was now impossible thanks to the effect of Earth Blast.

Kwa kwa kwa kwang, kwa kwa kwa kwang!

The warriors hit by the Heavy Walkers flew dozens of metres away. At the same time, a message window appeared in front of the warriors.

-The attack has exceeded your defense and the 'Guard Break' effect is applied.

The Guard Break effect which was applied when the attack exceeded the defense! Guard Break was the most troublesome problem under the effect of Earth Blast. Usually armour warriors never had their defense lower than the enemy's damage, no matter how strong the enemy was. The combination of armour, helmet, gloves, shoes etc. all contributed to a high defense. The warriors who took a defense position could also use their shields to full effect.....if the shield was successfully used to defend then its defense would be applied. So the shield boasted the best defensive power of all equipment! When 100% of the shield's defense was applied, the warrior would become like a tanker. However, the 3 times stat difference had a huge effect. The Heavy Walker was also a huge demon with tremendous attack power. After Earth Blast was used, the Heavy Walker's attack immediately exceeded the warriors' defense. So the expedition's defense line collapsed in vain.

-Bakuram, bakuram, puraibata, bakuram!

Following behind the Heavy Walkers were the Tallons, monsters with 5 heads and 8 arms, etc.....all the demonic monsters within the fortress shrieked and exited. With the defense formation collapsed, the monsters rampaged among the expedition's troops. Requests for help started to come from all over the place.

".....Retreat."

In the end, Haverstein sighed and gave the command to retreat. Then the unit commanders started shouted.

"What do you mean? Retreat?"

"If we retreat then we won't be able to catch up with the Bristania expedition!"

"The Bristania expedition will take control!"

“Besides.....have you forgotten? If Bristania arrives first then Commander-nim.....”

“It doesn’t matter if I am reassigned.”

Haverstein replied through clenched teeth.

“If we retreat then we won’t be able to catch up with the Bristania expedition. But if we continue to fight and are wiped out then what is the point of arriving at Silrinad first?”

“That is true however.....”

“There is no time for arguing. As you can see, the military situation has completely reversed. If we continue to hold on then the sacrifices will only become larger. The strategy has already failed. We need to save as much people as possible for any future plans.”

The unit commanders looked upset but they no longer raised any objections. They didn’t know of any method to change the situation. Then like Haverstein said, it would be best to retreat and avoid any more damages. The Black Obelisk Forest was already destroyed and the Grippers all killed so the next commander should have no problem capturing Pabiun Fortress. Of course the Bristania expedition would’ve already triumphantly entered Silrinad.

“I understand. Then Commander-nim should also retreat.”

“.....I will stay here until the end.”

“Huh?”

“If we retreat here then leadership will be handed to Bristania and a new commander will replace me. I’m the knight who caused such problems to the kingdom. Then my job now isn’t to preserve my life but save as many soldiers of the Schudenberg Kingdom as possible.”

“Commander-nim!”

The unit commanders were lost in admiration after hearing Haverstein's words. However Racard's voice shattered the mood.

"Stupid people, this isn't the time to be idle!"

Kwa kwa kwa kwang, kwa kwa kwa kwang!

Racard cried out as a roaring sound occurred to the right side. Haverstein and the unit commanders turned around and stiffened. The Heavy Walkers and Tallons had broken through the lines of defense and was heading towards headquarters. They had aimed to capture the fortress in this battle so the headquarters was placed too far in front. After the expedition army was pushed, the monsters immediately headed towards the headquarters.

"Heok, stop those guys!"

"Request support from the nearby unit!"

The leaders grasped the situation too late and their orders were one step behind. Before the commands could be obeyed, the defense line had been annihilated by the Heavy Walkers. Then the Tallons poured into the camp and caused chaos among the soldiers.

"Ugh, royal guards! Protect the Commander!"

The unit commanders shouted as the troops blocked the monsters. Meanwhile the royal guards had surrounded Haverstein. But before they could sneak out of headquarters, they were caught by the Heavy Walkers and attacked. The Heavy Walker's attacks caused Guard Break and the barrier created by the royal guards was pulled down. When the royal guards flew everywhere, Haverstein instantly swung his sword.

"You demons!"

Haverstein's long sword accurately split a Tallon's neck. Just like a user, the NPC's abilities varied depending on the level and skills. As the commander of the expedition, Haverstein was a high ranking NPC. He might be young but he had elite stats for a NPC. Even under the effect of Earth Blast, Haverstein's attack dealt a critical blow. Haverstein didn't miss the opportunity and continued defeating dozens of Tallons with the help of the royal guards. But killing dozens of Tallons didn't have the situation. After a short time, the royal guards were defeated and the injured Haverstein was surrounded by monsters. It was a desperate crisis! But Haverstein's face didn't show any signs of fear.

"I have no intention of leaving the commander's position alive. I have to kill even more before I die!"

Haverstein made a desperate resolution and enthusiastically rushed towards the demonic monsters. It was the true spirit of a warrior! Unfortunately, his sword couldn't keep up with his determination. After 10 minutes of fierce fighting.....

Kakakakak, chaeng!

His sword collided with a Heavy Walker's hammer and broke.

"Dammit, Dark Dash!"

Racard didn't know what to do so he closed his eyes and used Dark Dash on the Heavy Walker. Racard knew what an important person Haverstein was to Ark. Wouldn't he be beaten if he allowed Haverstein to be killed?

"Ack!"

However Racard was the one thrown back after hitting the Heavy Walker. If the users' attacks that were affected by Earth Blast didn't work properly then naturally Racard's attacks wouldn't work either. When Haverstein stumbled and fell, the Tallons swarmed like ants.

"Ugh! Is it going to end here?"

Haverstein murmured in a hopeless voice.

“Ooohhh! T-they’re here!”

Racard who was touching the bump on his head suddenly looked out and shouted. At that moment, a voice rang out through the battlefield.

“Demonic Distortion!”

Then an amazing scene occurred in front of Haverstein. Something appeared in the sky over the battlefield. They were swords, spears, armour and various other equipment. The equipment tangled together and formed a pentagon. After floating in the air for a bit, the equipment then exploded. And the surrounding space started to mysteriously warp. There was a sucking sensation from the warped space and the monsters surrounding Haverstein were sucked in.

“T-this is.....?”

Haverstein’s crisis had been averted. Then 200 different people appeared in the warped space. Haverstein was shock after seeing their faces.

“Y-you guys?”

“Please retreat to the back. Take this, Dark Strike!”

One man moved like a flash of light. At the same time, the Heavy Walker approaching behind Haverstein received heavy damage and stumbled. The man dived at the Heavy Walker and continuously wielded his sword. Dozens of attacks hit the Heavy Walker’s body like a meteor shower. The Heavy Walker couldn’t counterattack properly and collapsed.

“.....Fortunately I’m not too late.”

The man smiled and turned around after handling the Heavy Walker. Haverstein gaped with surprise before exclaiming.

“Ark!”

That’s right. The one holding a sword with a dark aura was Ark.

“You’ve returned. By the way, that vortex just now? How did you.....?”

“I’ll explain later.”

Ark said to Haverstein before looking around.

“The situation isn’t as good as I expected.”

“.....As you can see. You risked your life to blow up the Black Obelisk Forest but we couldn’t stop the Earth Blast so it turned out like this. At present the Bristania expedition will reach Silrinad and even if we retreat, there is no guarantee we can do it safely.”

“Retreat? Is that a joke?”

Ark shook his head at the ridiculousness of those words. Then he raised a palm in front of Haverstein and said.

“5 minutes. Give me 5 minutes. I assure you. You’ll be able to capture Pabiun Fortress after exactly 5 minutes.”

“5 minutes? What does that mean? The effect of Earth Blast still hasn’t disappeared.....”

“I don’t have time to explain in detail. Believe in me and delay the retreat by 5 minutes.”

Ark interrupted Haverstein and spoke bluntly. Haverstein looked at Ark before shouting to the leaders nearby.

“Quickly send a signal to all troops on the battlefield. Cancel the orders for a retreat. Maintain the current position. Concentrate on defense and wait for the next command!”

“You won’t regret your choice.”

Ark checked the signal flare in the sky with a smile and turned his body.

“You know the situation right? There is no time to be playing around.”

The people who appeared with Ark simultaneously pulled out their weapons. Around 70 special forces had survived the operation. But they weren’t the only people who appeared from the vortex.

“Grrrrr.”

“You can see the demonic monsters.”

“We can’t let them win!”

130 people with fangs also appeared among the group and glared at the demons. With white fur and black strops, they were the White Tiger clan that protected Shangri-La. Ark looked around and directed the White Tiger clan and special forces.

“The special forces will help the main army to restore the defense line. Each White Tiger member will move with a special forces member.”

Before arriving at the battlefield, the White Tigers had already been paired off. There was a reason Ark organized it this way. Based on their experience in the canyon, the White Tiger clan were the strongest! The NPCs were stronger than the level 350 special forces.

‘But they don’t have experience in a group battle.’

That was the only disadvantage with the White Tigers. They were born with the power of the tiger and were without a doubt the strongest warriors. But they were born and lived in Shangri-La so they didn’t have battle experience. That was the reason a few White Tigers died at the canyon. They just ran in blindly and became the focus of the concentrated attacks.

‘I have to teach them how to fight in a group if I want to take advantage of their power.’

This was the conclusion Ark came to. But it took time to teach them tricks of a group battle. They were beast NPCs so there was no guarantee how long it would take to teach them to fight like humans. So he came up with the system of pairing the White Tigers with the soldiers. The special forces were the elite users from the expedition force so they had a good grasp on how to move in a war. When paired with their tactics, the abilities of the White Tigers could be utilized to full effect. Ark was able to confirm that effect straight away.

-Kuaaaaaah!

Kwa kwa kwa kwang!

When the Heavy Walkers used Guard Break and the defense of the special forces decreased and they became stunned. There was no way to stop the onslaught of the Heavy Walkers!

“Keuaaaaang!”

Then 1 of the White Tiger members ran up to the Heavy Walker. The White Tiger jumped up and dug their fangs into the neck of the Heavy Walker. The Heavy Walker shrieked and shook its body but the fangs didn’t move. After knocking down the Heavy Walker, the special forces members who weren’t stunned anymore helped the White Tiger. The White Tiger removed his fangs and licked his lips that were wet with blood before seeking another prey. But the soldier shook his head and said.

“It is dangerous to go out from now on. We should have the defense camp for now.”

The White Tiger stepped back after the soldier's words. The White Tigers helped the lacking offensive power of the soldiers while the soldiers helped the White Tigers with their tactics.

'The urgent fire has been put out.'

Ark looked around with satisfaction. Before Ark's troops arrived, the headquarters had been completed surrounded by the demonic monsters. But Ark had exchanged 200 monsters with Demonic Distortion. Therefore the number of demons around headquarters was reduced while Ark's group appeared there. The defense formation of headquarters which had fallen into confusion was restored with the appearance of the White Tigers and the special forces.

'Now, shall I get started?'

Ark turned around and looked at the White Tigers. Around 70 White Tigers had joined the battle with the 70 special forces so there were 60 still remaining. They were gathered to protect the 10 prophets in the centre. That's right. Some prophets had accompanied Ark's group. There was a reason the prophets came to the battlefield despite having no combat power. It was because of the big box a prophet was carrying. The old wooden box was the Ark of Creation kept in Shangri-La for hundreds of years!

"Lariette-nim!"

Ark shouted and Lariette nodded. The prophets lowered the Ark of Creation to the ground. The prophets began to circle the ark while kneeling and humming.

"Tasha, Naburan heirado narado....."

"Sinarudo maguran harena boradu baram....."

When the prophets started chanting spells, light immediately began to flow around the ark. But strangely the light was a mixture of black and white light which seemed to be fighting. But the tainted light disappeared when Lariette approached and touch the Ark of Creation, causing a bright light to shoot up into the dark sky.

-Kurak, baguram, baguram!

The demonic monsters started shrieking. Until then, the thousands of demonic monsters had been recklessly attacking the expedition. In fact, the monsters hadn't intended to attack the headquarters and were just randomly attacking. But when the light shot up from the sky to pierce the darkness, the movements of the demons immediately changed. They all shrieked and started to head towards the pillar of light.

'I thought it would become like this.'

Ark had expected this situation and arranged some troops around the Ark of Creation.

"Now switch to a defense formation! All troops concentrate on protecting this area!"

The special forces and White Tiger clan formed a circle around the ark and got into a defense formation. Then Ark looked at Shambala and laughed.

"What are you doing? Come! It is time to work Shambala."

"What? You want me to fight? Am I your pet? Even if you shed tears begging me to help you....."

"Stop joking around. I used the '1 time Shambala use' coupon. You should be a little more compliant."

"What do you mean? I've already....."

"I didn't want you to help with the operation."

Ark laughed and muttered. That's right. When Ark used the '1 time Shambala use' coupon, he hadn't clearly stated what the condition was. He just spoke ambiguously that he wanted Shambala's help with this war. Shambala thought he meant helping with the operation to blow up the black obelisks.

!“Didn’t I say that I wanted help with this war?”

“What? Then you meant?”

“Yes, the ‘1 time Shambala use’ coupon will last until this war ends. And you’ve already agreed.”

“This bastard! Only saying that now.....”

Shambala glared at Ark’s shameless answer. But Ark just murmured cunningly.

“You and I are friends. Isabel will be disappointed if you don’t keep promises with your friends.”

“.....You cheeky bastard!”

Shambala gave up and took out his daggers before entering the battlefield. Despite his anger, he didn’t want Isabel to know him as someone who broke promises.

‘Kekeke, what an innocent fellow. He is like my pet now.’

Ark looked at the back of Shambala’s head and laughed. But Shambala was just a bonus. Ark’s summons were a separate matter

“Racard!”

“Yes Master!”

“Use satellite surveillance mode and keep repeating the movements of the monsters!”

“Understood, roger!”

Racard flew like a bullet into the sky at Ark's command. He switched to satellite mode and occasionally reported updates about the battlefield.

"200 monsters consisting of Tallons ad Heavy Walkers are approaching from the right side!"

"Alright! Shambala, move to the right side defense line. Summon Demon Purital, Clad Armour!"

Ark rushed to the target area and shouted.

Clack clack clack, clack clack clack clack!

Purital was summoned to the area behind Ark. As soon as Purital appeared, his bones were taken apart and reformed around Ark. The ribs split to cover his upper body while the skull covered his head like a helmet. The leg and arm bones twisted strangely and stuck to Ark's gloves and shoes.

-You have used Clad Armour.

* Damage will increase by 17~22.

* Defense will increase by 98.

* Health will increase by 1,866.

"Flash!"

The transformed Ark brandished his sword and shouted. Ark swept through the group of Tallons like a lightning bolt. The heads of the Tallons that Ark pierced spouted blood like a fountain. Even with Earth Blast increasing their abilities by 50%, the health of the Tallons was drained.

“.....This is no joke.”

Ark looked at his sword that had a black aura around it. It was the ‘Shining Darkness’ that he received as a quest reward for . The attack was 55~65! This was 15 more than the Promised Sword’s base damage. In addition, it dealt an extra 10% against demonic monsters. Purital also increased his attack by 17~22. In the end, Shining Darkness’ attack increased by 37~42. This number was similar to Ark’s original damage. In other words, his damage had increase by more than two times. But that was just the base damage. His damage against demons increased thanks to Demonic Response. Currently, the level of ‘Demonic Response’ was **IV**. This meant a 40% damage bonus when dealing with demonic monsters.

‘I’m also impervious to the Demonic sphere of influence!’

Ark smiled as he used Dark Blade and turned the Tallons into rags. That’s right. Ark had the dark attribute so the Demonic sphere of influence didn’t affect him. It was the same even with the effect of Earth Blast amplifying the sphere of influence. In fact, the black fog caused darkness so Ark received the 50% dark attribute bonus even in the daytime. Well, that was offset by the demons also having their stats increased by 50%. But besides the dark attribute bonus, Ark also had the Demonic Response **IV** which increased his attack by 40%. Along with the 10% bonus of Shining Darkness, that was a 50% bonus against the demons. It wasn’t an exaggeration to say that Dark Soul was a profession specialized towards fighting against demonic monsters.

“Dark Strike!”

Pepepepeng, pepepepeng!

The Tallons went flying whenever Ark swung their swords. It was ineffective even if the Tallons tried to use their shields or weapons. This time Ark was the one who used Guard Break against the demonic monsters. Moreover, Shambala was also fighting near Ark.

“Shambala, take the right side!”

“Sheesh, you don’t have to say it again. Torrential Sword!”

Shambala spun his body like a spinning top and dozens of daggers appeared in the area. The Heavy Walker who was running towards Ark became like a hedgehog and stumbled. Assassins possessed the dark attribute so Shambala also wasn’t affected by the demonic sphere of influence. He actually had a dark attribute bonus similar to Ark. It wasn’t that different from dealing with general monsters of a similar level. They already weren’t rivals for Shambala anymore.

“Sun, Gae, Yeol, Seom!”

Shambala ran lightly across the battlefield with his dagger. Shambala would never admit it and he argued every time but he liked fighting together with Ark. If Ark attacked to the right then Shambala would automatically rotate to the left and attack. If Shambala ever rushed an opponent then Ark would go behind him and prevent any attacks from the rear. It was a perfect combination! The demons collapsed one-sidedly when the two people moved in unison. Thanks to Earth Blast, an ordinary user couldn’t even last against one demon. Yet the two of them were one-sidedly slaughtering dozens of monsters.

“T-that is ridiculous.....!”

“Two people are stronger than a unit?”

“I heard rumours that they are Dark Wolf and Blue Sword.....”

“Dark Wolf and Blue Sword!”

“They interrupted a huge war and helped Seutandal rise! If we have Dark Wolf and Blue Sword then it is possible to win this battle! They will create a similar legend to Seutandal!”

“Waaaaahhhhh!”

Thanks to Ark and Shambala’s actions, the expedition army regained their morale and pushed back against the demonic monsters while shouting. However, motivation wasn’t enough to change the tide of

the war. In addition, the monsters were crowding around the Ark of Creation! While other troops were able to escape the crisis, the headquarters was receiving the concentrated attacks from thousands of monsters. No matter how much Ark and Shambala raised the morale of the soldiers, it was impossible for them to block all the demons.

Kwa kwa kwa kwang, kwa kwa kwa kwang!

After a few minutes. In the end, part of the defensive line around headquarters collapsed. Ark and Shambala were on the opposite side of that place.

“Damn, if the defense line collapses then headquarters will become dangerous! Special forces and the White Tiger clan will reinforce the part that collapsed. “Shambala, there’s no time. Push them to one place so we can quickly take care of those guys.”

“I know! Torrential Sword!”

Shambala might’ve complained but he still pushed the demonic monsters to one place. They were finally gathered in a large group. Ark’s eyes brightened and he shouted.

“White Tiger’s Roar!”

Keuaaaaang!

A huge tiger appeared above Ark’s head and roared. A tremendous shock wave spread and caused the demonic monsters to stumble. White Tiger’s Roar was a special option attached to the ‘White Tiger’s Cloak’ that was flapping from Ark’s back.

-White Tiger’s Cloak (Rare)

Armour type: Mantle

Defense: 35 Durability: 60/60

Weight: 35 User restriction: Level 400

A cloak made from the leather of the White Tiger clan that lives in the snow covered mountains to the north of the continent. The White Tiger clan was known for their valour and received the duty of protecting the prophet clan living in Shangri-La from Hero Maban. The valour of the White Tiger clan is lodged in this cloak and can be used in different types of situations.

Cool down time: 1 hour. Mana consumption: 200>

This cloak was the compensation for the quest. The White Tiger clan elders gave it to him after safely bringing the Nuran residents to Shangri-La. That was another reason Ark headed to Shangri-La after exiting the canyon. The quest was an additional quest that he could solve in one go. And the difficulty of that quest was A+. Therefore the quest rewards would also be considerable. It was a rare cloak that raised courage by 30% and agility by 30! There was also the White Tiger's Roar which caused fear among the enemies. However, there was another meaning being the rare 'White Tiger's Cloak.' As soon as Ark received the cloak from the White Tiger elder, a new information window appeared.

-The set items' effect has been applied.

You have equipped a new item in the set.

-Set

A special set of items that craftsmen created for an ancient hero. Naturally, the effects will become more powerful when the number of equipped set items increases. If you obtain all the items in a set then the effects will be beyond compare.

* Currently equipped set items:

『Raccoon's Pith』 『Cat Paws』 『Guardian Armour of the Merpeople』 『Wolf's Feet』 『White Tiger's Cloak』

You have equipped 5 items in the

That's right. It was the set completion! Ark had met several beast clans and received a set equipment as a reward. So he had obtained 4 of the Animal King set. There was only one remaining until the set was complete. But the set was finally completed after obtaining the White Tiger's Cloak. Once the set was completed, the bonus given far surpassed the previous ones. When he added up the combined stats that increased, strength, stamina and agility increase by 35 while defense increased by 70! The additional bonus of the set effect was the same as gaining 16~17 levels.

‘It's good that I haven't changed the equipment in the meantime!’

In fact, Ark had obtained several equipment better than his current ones but the set effect was valuable so he had kept it. But as his level grew, the equipment had been reaching his limit. Now that the set was completed and he checked the added bonus, all his worries were settled. However, the set completion bonus wasn't just additional stats.

“Wild Strength!”

Ark cried out after causing fear with the White Tiger's Roar. At the same time, Ark's equipment started shining. The armour, helmet, gloves, shoes.....

The forms of the beasts Ark obtained the equipment from floated in front of the equipment. From the armour was a mermaid swimming in the ocean, the helmet had a raccoon digging a tunnel, the gloves had the Meow jumping around the trees while they shoes had the wolves howling on the plains. Finally from the fluttering cloak emerged a white tiger roaring from the top of a snow-covered mountain.

A message window floated in front of Ark the moment the white tiger roaring from the mountain appeared.

-The Wild Strength skill from the Animal King set has been activated.

These equipment are connected with several beast clans who live in New World. Each equipment contains a property of the beast clan in it. Although the species are different, they live in the natural ecosystems and have an inseparable symbiotic relationship with each other. When equipped with these equipment, the mutual power will react and you will be given a strong power. When all the equipment is worn, the wearer's potential would explode and Wild Strength will be unleashed.

Cool down time: 12 hours>

* Passive skills are excluded

It was the option Wild Strength that he obtained from collecting all of the Animal King set. It increased the effectiveness of all skills by 50% for 10 minutes. This meant all offensive skills would gain an additional 50% damage. Well, he consumed double the mana instead but he could show tremendous power for a short period of time.

“Radun, a demonic sealed sword!”

Ssak ssak, ssak ssak ssak ssak!

“Blade Tempest!”

Radun spat out a sword and quickly made it explode. The cursed sword shattered and caused a storm. After receiving various bonuses, Ark's combat power had increased. The cursed sword also had a lot of damage. Thanks to Wild Strength will increased all skills by 50%, the power of Blade Tempest surpassed imagination. It wasn't just the damage but also the number of fragments that changed. Usually the

sword broke into hundreds of pieces when Blade Tempest was triggered. But the power of the skill had increased by 50% thanks to Wild Strength. Therefore the sword broke into 1,000 pieces.

When the sword fragments collided with a body, sparks flew and the whole space was swallowed up. The demons inside the storm had their health sucked out at a tremendous rate. When the storm passed, the unsteady demonic monsters were in various tattered states. The demons couldn't even heal. The demons were in various pieces with limbs cut off that they couldn't even recognize themselves, let alone check their health.

“Now. Finish them quickly and concentrate on the defense on the other side.”

“Waaaaahhhhh!”

The discouraged soldiers ran over with surprised looks. The demons were already in a state of panic from Blade Tempest and couldn't withstand the assault from the soldiers. After Ark gave the order, he rushed over with Shambala to the collapsed defense line. But despite Ark and Shambala's struggles, the situation was still worsening. Thanks to the light from the Ark of Creation, 4~5 times the number of demons were already crowding headquarters.

“All units should concentrate on headquarters and construct defense lines!”

Haverstein called the expedition forces to headquarters but it was already overrun by demonic monsters. The units had arrived too late so they could only attack the monsters on the outskirts. The monsters ignored the expedition members and just attacked headquarters even more violently. The numbers of demons kept on increasing no matter how many Ark and Shambala killed.

Flash, kwa kwa kwa kwa, kwa kwa kwa kwa!

An intense flash of light suddenly appeared at headquarters.

“That's it!”

Ark turned his back on the demonic monsters. At the same time, a tremendous view unfolded in front of him.

“.....Descend to this earth, Great Mother of Creation!”

The prophets surrounding the Ark of Creation simultaneously raised their heads and chanted a spell. The Ark of Creation opened and a pure white light shot into the sky. It spun like a whirlwind and was sucked into Lariette’s body. When the light entwined with Lariette’s body, her body became thousands of times larger. The Lariette who rose against the background of the black sky was different. With black hair like obsidian, crystal clear eyes and skin as white as a snowfield, she was a surprisingly beautiful woman.....no, it was the form of a goddess.

“T-that is.....?”

When she appeared, everybody forgot themselves and looked up captivated. Even the demonic monsters stared.

Kuoooooh-!

Shining silvery wings with thousands of eyes on it unfolded from the goddess’ back. The huge wings reached several kilometres.....The wings flapped and swept through the black fog. And light started to cover the space where the wings flapped. At first it was a small and soft light until it spread and exploded like a big bang.

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

The light that touched the black fog swallowed it up.

“Huck! E-explosion? Avoid it!”

When the explosion occurred, the expedition forces screamed and rushed all over the place. However the entire area was exploding. There was no place to run away. Eventually the expedition members were caught by the blast. But the expedition members were all confused in the next moment. There was

no impact from being involved in the explosion. No, instead they actually started recovering instead of being damaged.

“The heavy spirit pressing down on my body has disappeared.”

“But there’s more. This aura gushing from my chest.....”

“I don’t know why but my courage is rising quickly!”

The expedition members murmured as they were enveloped with light.

-Keuahahak!

But the demonic monsters caught in the explosion were different. Their flesh burnt from the explosion and the health dropped. Suddenly a message window appeared in front of Ark.

-The Ark of creation has been triggered!

The power of the Creator who made this world in the beginning is contained inside the Ark of Creation. Because both light and dark were a part of the Creator, this power can be used for light or darkness. If used by a Holy Knight then it can be a blessing or a curse if used by a Ruin Knight.

When a Saint Knight calls upon the inner light (Sanctuary: Saint).

When a Ruin Knight calls upon the darkness (Sanctuary: Devil).

-Saint Knight’s special ability ‘Sanctuary: Saint’ has been triggered.

The area blessed with the effect from the Ark of Creation can't be affected by the 'Demonic Sphere of Influence' or the 'Black Obelisk' for 1 year.

In addition, all demonic monsters within the light will receive 1~2,000 damage. However all allies will regain 1~1,000 health, have all abnormal states removed and morale increased by 50%>

'This is the effect of Ark of Creation.'

Ark's eyes widened after he checked the information window. In fact, Ark hadn't known the effect of the Ark of Creation. The prophet clan protecting the Ark of Creation was the same as well. All he knew was that the Ark of Creation had the power to drive back the darkness. He was sure that the Ark of Creation would change the military situation but was uncertain about the rest. Nevertheless, he talked confidently to Haverstein because he couldn't let them retreat. If the expedition retreated then Haverstein would lose his position. If that happened then Ark would become bankrupt.

'It will be the same as dying! If there is even the slightest chance then I have to take it!'

That was Ark's thought. However, the effect of the Ark of Creation was unthinkable. All the black fog within a 10 kilometres distance was destroyed. It meant the effect of the Demonic Sphere of Influence also disappeared. All the bonuses given to the demonic monsters had faded! The demons lost their 50% bonus with the supporters recovered the 50% stats. In addition, the demons caught in the explosion were damaged while the allies had their health recovered and morale increased by 50%. The situation had reversed.

"What on earth.....?"

Haverstein muttered as he looked up at the blue sky. Ark replied with a wicked grin.

"Now we can fight back."

Haverstein looked around after hearing Ark's words. The expedition members who had been looking battered now looked recovered. On the other hand, the demons had lost their bonuses and looked fearful. It was obvious to everybody. The side of victory had tipped.....

“Do you see? We have the will of God. Now we will take that will of God and show the power of justice. Defeat the demons!”

“Waaahhhh!”

The expedition members shouted as they attacked. The demons had seen the pillar of light and swarmed the headquarters. And the expedition members were gathered around the outskirts because of Haverstein’s order. The result was obvious. With all the bonuses and penalties gone, the demons were no match for the military expedition. And their morale rose even more when the enemy weakly died. On the other hand, the demonic monsters had completely lost their fighting spirit. When the expedition members cried out and pressed forward, the demons quickly collapsed.

And Pabiun Fortress that they struggled with for more than 10 days was captured in a few hours.