

Ark Vol 22 C 4

Chapter 4

ACT 4 Behind the History

“Dammit!”

Ark cursed as he exited the main tent. Sid and Shambala who were waiting outside ran towards him.

“Ark-nim!”

“Ark, what happened?”

“This whole situation is bad.”

Ark muttered nervously as he kicked a stone on the ground.

“The Schudenberg and Bristania kingdoms won’t move.”

“How come?”

Sid asked in confusion. Ark rubbed his forehead and recalled the situation that happened just then. It all began with the messenger’s report. Silvana had been attacked by demonic monsters! After receiving the unimaginable report, Ark flew straight away to headquarters.

“Commander-nim!”

“You came? Take a seat.”

The leaders had already received the notification and were meeting in the main tent. Ark was able to hear more specific details about Nagaran. Apparently hundreds of obelisks had been plunged into

Nagaran. The number of demons there were 100,000. And 2 territories had fallen immediately. Ark who had listened to the general situation asked in a desperate tone.

“They’ve already captured 3 territories?”

“Because sieges were forbidden under martial law, most of the estates were empty.”

“D-do you know which territories have been occupied?”

“The news was sent from the kingdom. So we don’t know which territories have been captured.”

Haverstein said with a serious expression.

“I know there are many parts you’re worried about but wait for a bit. There is currently a meeting of nobles in progress so we might be able to figure out more about the situation.”

Then Haverstein closed his mouth.

‘Have the demonic monsters already captured Silvana?’

Ark had flown to the headquarters to check that information. Yet Haverstein was unaware of which territories had been captured. Ark became jumpy at the idea and thought of contacting the Dark Eden members. But Ark soon shook his head.

‘I can check if Silvana is safe at any time. The important thing is learning how the Schudenberg expedition responds to the invasion.’

That’s right. 100,000 demons had invaded Nagaran so it didn’t matter which territories were occupied. Even if it was still safe, it was only a matter of time before Silvana was occupied. And even if Silvana wasn’t occupied, Ark had no way to prevent it by himself. The fate of Silvana hung on what the Schudenberg Kingdom would do. And the first one to receive the decision of the Kingdom was those inside the headquarters. Ark was thinking that when something interrupted him.

“I don’t understand their intentions.”

“Why are they trying to attack Nagaran.....?”

The unit leaders sighed and complained. The unit leaders weren’t the only ones confused. Currently the Schudenberg expedition was about to enter Silrinad. When the Bristania expedition arrived either tonight or tomorrow then they would begin their invasion of Silrinad.

‘With the Ark of Creation to remove the Sphere of Influence, it won’t take a long time to wipe out all the monsters. And the Demonic War will change 180 degrees when the expedition army regains Silrinad.’

That’s right. It was because the demonic monsters had blocked the users from reviving in the Sinus Principality. It wasn’t an exaggeration to say that users played a large role in the wars of New World. When an NPC died it was forever but a user would just revive after 24 hours. The black obelisks had the same function of reviving the demons but the obelisks could be destroyed. Then it would be like an ordinary war. If the users from the Sinus Principality concentrated their strengths then it wouldn’t have been occupied so easily by the demonic monsters. But several thousand obelisks had hit the major cities and towns at the same time so the users and NPCs didn’t really have time before it was occupied. The users who registered their recovery places in those cities and towns couldn’t revive any more. This was the reason why the Sinus Principality couldn’t fight back and became occupied.

‘But if the military expedition regains Silrinad.....’

Silrinad was the Sinus Principality’s main commercial city and the centre of traffic! There were a considerable number of users who registered it as a resurrection place. Those users would be able to resurrect. With Silrinad secured as a resurrection place, they could spread out to recapture the cities and villages and obtain more places for users to resurrect. It wasn’t just the users. Although the regular troops of the Sinus Principality had been killed, not all of them had been wiped out. All the hiding soldiers would gather at Silrinad once it was regained. In addition, if the magic tower was restored then movement between Bristania and Schudenberg would be easy.

‘When considering the future war situation, the most important thing for the demonic monsters was to defend Silrinad. If they can prevent the expedition from recapturing Silrinad then it would prevent the expansion of power. But to mobilize a high number of demons to attack Nagaran out of nowhere.....’

This was the part that confused Ark and the unit leaders.

“Their purpose might not be Nagaran itself.”

Then a unit commander who was carefully locked in thought said.

“Nagaran is an area which borders to the Bristania and Schudenberg kingdom. Then aren't they occupying Nagaran in order to intimidate both countries and seal the expedition's movements while the gather monsters around Silrinad?”

“It is a strategy to intimidate us and seal our movements?”

Haverstein narrowed his eyes and murmured. If they thought like that then it was possible to understand the movement of the demonic monsters. Nagaran was an area which bordered the three kingdoms. In other words, if they occupied Nagaran then it was possible to advance into any kingdom. The aristocrats of Schudenberg and Bristania would have no choice but to feel uneasy. If they judged that protecting their own kingdom was more important than freeing the Sinius Principality then they might recall the expeditions to prepare for an invasion. The armies would have no choice but to return to their home kingdoms. Like Haverstein said, it was a strategy to threaten the body and seal the arms! But another leader said in a sceptical voice.

“That makes some sense. But can the demons really move that strategically?”

“Didn't we have a hard time capturing Pabiun Fortress because the demons showed surprising tactics?”

“But they didn't show those type of movements after that. We spent three days moving here. If the demons knew the importance of Silrinad then they should've responded earlier. But they haven't used such good strategy anywhere else.”

“Then what do you think their aim is?”

“That.....”

The leader who objected sighed and closed his mouth. In the end, little progress was made in the meeting.

“It is difficult for us to accurately judge the situation in Nagaran. Anyway, I will connect with the kingdom and ask the opinion of His Majesty. His Majesty will decide how to respond to this problem.”

Eventually Haverstein forced the problem onto the King. After that, the magician in charge of communication used a crystal ball and connected to the kingdom. The aristocrat meeting had already been held and they finished discussing how to cope with the situation. When the communication was connected, the conclusion of the meeting was passed on.

If the intention of the demons was to tie the ankles of the expedition then there was no reason to be fooled. The nobles also didn't have to deal with the demonic monsters so they didn't respond sensitively to the threat. In addition, the demons had stopped their movements after capturing Silvana, Radon and Beiku. Even if they wanted to threaten the other kingdoms, there was enough time to build a line of defense. The military expedition could focus on recapturing Silrinad.

“T-then Silvana has been captured?”

Sid shouted with a pale face after hearing the explanation.

“Don't say it again!”

Ark shouted with a displeased expression. Ark had felt utterly gloomy after hearing the news. Then Shambala asked in a sarcastic tone.

“What will you do? Will you die now that your territory was taken away?”

“The estate hasn't been completely lost.”

Ark scowled at Shambala and declared sharply. That's right. The demonic monsters hadn't taken the ownership of Silvana away but just occupied it. The rule that the three kingdoms set was that only those

who won in the siege would claim ownership. And Ark was the proper Lord of Silvana. If he drove the demons away then Silvana would be returned to Ark. So there was still hope that Ark could regain Silvana.

‘Hopefully the demons didn’t do too much damage when they occupied it.’

Shortly after receiving the message, the Continental Commerce Firm was the first thing that came to his mind. Even if he managed to take back Silvana, the place where his current supplies for the expedition were stored was the Continental Commerce Firm. The goods from Seutandal had been shipped and stored in the Continental Commerce Firm. If the Continental Commerce Firm was attacked by the demons and the supplies destroyed then Ark would become bankrupt. But luckily the demons didn’t attack Silvana from outside. They had driven the black obelisks around the castle and attacked. When the demons concentrated on the castle, the staff of the Continental Commerce Firm managed to obtain the supplies in the warehouse and escaped.

‘The NPC coalition members are also safe.’

Naturally all the users who protected the castle had died from the monsters. But the users could resurrect. The problem was the Meow, Wolrang and Eastern Nation NPCs in the coalition. If they died then it would be a fatal blow to Dark Eden. But fortunately the coalition members had followed Ark’s instructions and had been training in the secret dungeon. Therefore they didn’t know the castle was being attacked until Ark contacted them.

“But.....”

Ark murmured as he bit his lip. Ark still received some damage. Since the castle was occupied by the demons, the monthly salary disappeared. That was 18,000 gold for one month. Of course, not all of that salary went into Ark’s pocket but it was still thousands of gold a month. But was that all? Thanks to all his investments, the B class promotion had been just around the corner. But if it was occupied by the demons then the territory would clearly become impoverished. If the facilities and farmland was destroyed then the rating of the territory would fall. Even if he obtained the territory back, there was no guarantee how much time it would take to recover.

“Now’s not the time to be talking about this!”

Sid jumped and shouted.

“Don’t you think I know that already?”

Ark yelled in an annoyed voice. It was unnecessary to say but every second the estate was receiving some damage. But unless the Schudenberg kingdom moved, there was no way to retake Silvana. Dark Eden only had 3,800 troops. And there were 1,500 NPCs and 300 users, for a total of 1,800 troops stuck in the secret dungeon. Despite the situation, he also couldn’t give up the delivery of goods..... No, with the income from the estate gone then he had to have JusticeMan and the rehabilitation members work even harder to supply the goods. In the end, if Ark wanted to retake Silvana then he would have to fight the 100,000 monsters by himself. 100,000 against 1..... Ark would be swept away instantly.

‘It is stressful but there is nothing I can do. In this situation, I have no choice but to give up on Silvana for the moment. If we win the Demonic War then Silvana can be taken back so I should concentrate on the military supplies.’

That was the conclusion Ark came to after thinking for a while. But Sid became even more frantic.

“You’re going to just give up?”

“Damn, what am I supposed to do?”

“Isn’t there any way at all?”

“Do you think I haven’t considered all possibilities? No, why are you in such an uproar about it?”

“T-that.....”

Sid flinched and stuttered before sighing. The reason Sid was in such an uproar was the Silvana’s real estate. Like mentioned before, Sid had earned quite a lot of money from working at the Continental Commerce Firm. And his talk about owning a store in Selebrid was just to deceive Nadin. His real goal was a real estate venture!

'Huhuhu, if I invested in real estate then I can increase my money. Ark-nim also made a lot by investing in Lancel. Then I can also do that.'

So Sid used Ark as a role model and stated to buy real estate in Silvana. Silvana was an appropriate place for Sid to invest in. Contribution to the area was necessary to possess real estate. Thanks to working at the Continental Commerce Firm, Sid had increased Silvana's economy and earned quite a bit of contribution. He also knew about Ark's secret funds that he planned to use to develop Silvana. In other words, it meant that the land value would 100% rise as time passed.

'If the rating of the estate rises then the real estate value will also rise!'

Sid determined that and poured his saved money into the real estate. But if the territory became impoverished because of the demons then the real estate price would slump. Like Ark said, there was no guarantee on how long it would take to recover.

"It is the herbs to the rice." (I think he is comparing Sid as the herb to Ark who is the rice)

Shambala murmured with a pitying expression.

".....Well, I understand but it is inevitable. Just give up for now. It's not like the demonic monsters care about living there. If the Demonic War ends then we can recover it somehow."

"That's not it."

Sid sighed and said.

"Do you really not know? Why did the demons attack Silvana?"

"Isn't it to plunge the real estate price?"

Ark muttered sarcastically. Sid nodded with a firm expression and replied.

“Yes, that’s it!”

“What? You figured out something about the demons?”

“It is because of Ark-nim’s enemy!”

“Me?”

“.....Alan!”

Ark’s face stiffened at Sid’s answer.

“Isn’t Alan controlling the demonic monsters? Isn’t that why they attacked Silvana? They clearly want to destroy Silvana!”

‘Oh my god, why did I never think of that guy?’

His relaxed feeling melted away at the sound of Alan’s name. His biggest question at the moment was why the demons had attacked Nagaran. What if their purpose was to attack Silvana? And couldn’t Alan control the demonic monsters?

.....Then the answer was simple.

‘Alan might intend to occupy Silvana in order to damage me. He rallied the demons to make Silvana a barren land.’

It was possible if he used the various skills that belonged to the demons to pollute the land. If Ark recovered Silvana then the damage he would receive wouldn’t be small.

‘That Alan bastard, he really won’t let go until the end!’

Ark grinded his teeth together as he thought of this. Then Ark felt something strange.

‘Wait? Is that really Alan’s only purpose?’

If Silvana became barren then it would be a huge blow to Ark. But in the end, that would be it. Silvana couldn’t still be valuable without the farmland. Silvana had easy to navigate terrain and a river available for transport of goods. Its strong point was its geographical advantageous position in Nagaran. That geographic advantage wouldn’t disappear even if the land became barren.

‘Alan used to be the Lord of Silvana and he is a user in New World so he should already know this. It is impossible for him not to understand Silvana’s special quality. Then he only rallied 100,000 monsters to make the territory barren?’

Moreover, the military expedition was now about to attack Silrinad.

‘Alan moving overseas means that he is one of the ones behind this event. He wouldn’t do something simply for revenge. Alan is clearly getting something very important from this war.’

Yet he risked losing the war and brought 100,000 monsters to Nagaran just to damage Ark?

‘If Alan is moving then it must have something to do with this event. Is it simply to tie the ankle of the Schudenberg expedition? Or is there something else? It can’t be.....’

.....Silvana itself?

‘Wait! Let me organize my thoughts.’

The more he thought about it, the more complicated Ark’s head became. First, was Silvana occupied to grab the ankle of the Schudenberg expedition? According to the intelligence, they had stopped moving after capturing Silvana and 2 other territories.

.....So the probability was less than 10%.

Secondly, was Silvana captured in order for Alan to hit back at Ark? It was a possibility but Silvana would return to Ark when the Demonic War ended. Since Silvana's value lay in its geographic advantage, the actual blow wasn't that big.

.....The probability was less than 40%.

'There is only one reason why Alan gave up on Silrinad and attacked Nagaran. It is because Silvana contains something that he believes will win the Demonic War.'

When he thought about it like that, it was possible to explain while the demonic monsters stopped moving after they captured Radon and Beiku which surrounded Silvana. If Silvana was their goal then there would be no reason to capture Radon and Beiku. In fact, it might incite the Schudenberg and Bristania kingdoms even more if they occupied more estates. However the demons only captured the two territories on both sides of Silvana.

'Their reason for capturing Radon and Beiku is to block any possible attacks!'

It might be a bit of a stretch. But according to the defending coalition members, the Rwigenberg had appeared in the sky about Silvana. Rwigenberg was the Red Man's aerial fortress. Therefore the Red Man was related to why Alan attacked Silvana.

'There is something there. Just like the secret dungeon that the Three Kingdoms don't know about, there must be something hidden there!'

Ark was convinced of his guess. It was highly likely that this was the key to solving the situation.

'Then the reason Silvana was attacked has something to do with the future of this war? Whatever it is will change the situation by 180 degrees. It is necessary to find the reason why the demons are attacking Silvana. If I can prove it.....'

The Schudenberg and Bristania kingdoms were just observing the situation because they judged that it wouldn't have a big influence on the Demonic War. However, couldn't the secret hidden in Silvana change the tides of the war? If both kingdoms knew that then they would rally their power to regain Silvana!

'It is imperative that I find out what it is!'

"Radun, transform to Radunma!"

Ssak ssak ssak? Ssak ssak ssak ssak!

Ark who was locked in though suddenly shouted. Radun instantly turned in a giant lizard. Sid looked at Radun and asked with a flustered look.

"Eek! What, what the? Why all of a sudden?"

"There is a place I have to go."

"A place you have to go? Where? What about Silvana?"

"There's no time to explain. Let's go Radun!"

Radun then ran off through the snowfield.

Pa pa pa pa, pa pa pa pa!

Radun moved with tremendous speed across the snowfield. The place Ark was riding was towards the Albana Mountains. No, to be correct it was Shangri-La. That's right. After worrying about how to figure out Silvana's secret, Ark had thought of Shangri-La. Currently Ark couldn't guess what Alan wanted from Silvana. But some records of Silvana should remain. Shangri-La held the history of New World so if he looked for information about Silvana then wouldn't he find a clue?

'I have to quickly discover Alan's plan so I can stop it!'

After a while he finally arrived at the snow-capped Albana Mountains. It had taken the expedition three days to pass through the Albana Mountains to Silrinad and it had only taken Ark 14 hours to return. It was thanks to Radun's +500% movement speed and riding without a break.

"Only a bit more to go. Try your best Radun!"

Ssak ssak ssak, ssak ssak ssak ssak!

Pa pa pa pa! Pa pa pa pa!

Ark comforted the gasping Radunma while pushing him onwards. His short legs began to move even faster. Ark glanced around while using Nursing on Radunma.

'That's it, if I pass that gorge then I'll reach Shangri-La.'

The defense war had turned off and Shangri-La had floated back to its position on the ground. This was because the demonic monsters had retreated after Ark arrived in Shangri-La. The demons probably already realized that the Ark of Creation was in his hands and retreated. And not long afterwards, Ark had joined the expedition and helped capture Pabiun Fortress. At the same time, the demonic monsters withdrew from the Albana Mountains so there was no reason for the defense ward to be activated. As soon as he crossed the gorge, the site of Shangri-La reached his eyes.

'What the?'

But confusion spread over Ark's face as he looked at Shangri-La. It looked different from the Shangri-La that he saw before. The forest was burnt and the defensive tower from before had disappeared without a trace. Even the white tower in the middle was smashed in parts.

"Radun, stop. Summon Demon, Racard and Purital!"

Ark stopped in front of Shangri-La and summoned his pets.

“Racard, enter Shangri-La and find out what happened. Purital, be on the lookout for any monsters!”

“Yes!”

Clack clack clack, clack clack clack clack!

Racard flapped his wings and flew away. Ark carefully entered Shangri-La with Purital escorting him. The situation became clearer once he entered. The trees surrounding the white tower were cut with claw marks while blood spots were scattered over the snow covered ground. It was unmistakable signs of a battle!

‘The only culprits that would attack Shangri-La are the demons. But why?’

The demons had targeted the Ark of Creation. However, the expedition force had already obtained the Ark of Creation. Then it wasn’t the reason the demons had attacked Shangri-La?

“Master, there are no demons around. There are some White Tigers and prophets around the tower. But they are dead.”

Then he heard Racard’s voice who had been scouting. Ark ran straight towards the white tower on Radunma. Like Racard said, the dead bodies of the White Tigers and prophets were scattered around the tower.

“20 White Tigers and 10 prophets..... They were all wiped out?”

Ark muttered as he counted the bodies. Originally there were 150 White Tigers and 20 prophets living in Shangri-La. But they couldn’t hand the Ark of Creation over to an unknown person. That was why Lariette had been accompanied by 10 prophets carrying the Ark of Creation. 130 White Tigers had come along to protect them on the battlefield. Therefore that he only been 20 White Tigers and 10 prophets left in Shangri-La.

Ssak ssak ssak? Ssak ssak ssak ssak!

Radunma who had been licking the air suddenly turned his head. At the same time, one of the prophets lying on the ground flinched and moaned.

“Eung..... Eung.....”

‘A survivor!’

Ark hurriedly jumped down from Radunma. He forcibly opened the mouth and poured 3~4 potions into the prophet’s mouth. The prophet narrowed his eyes and asked.

“W-who.....”

“It’s me. Ark. What happened?”

“Ark..... Hero Maban’s descendant..... Cough!”

When the prophet coughed, his health instantly drained away.

.....It was already too late to him. In this situation, the NPC was sure to die unless a priest used magic to heal the soul. Feeding them potions was the same. Their health would just decrease over time.

“Have strength. You can beat this.”

But after Ark grabbed his hands and used Nursing, the prophet regained some vigour.

“After you left with the Ark of Creation, a black knight..... Leading the demons..... Shangri-La was attacked.”

“A black knight?”

Alan instantly popped into Ark’s head. In fact, Ark had thought there was one strange part while attacking Pabiun Fortress. The demons in Pabiun Canyon had been coordinated by Alan. But he never saw Alan while capturing Pabiun Fortress. It was the same even when marching through Pabiun Canyon towards Silrinad.

‘Then he ended up attacking Shangri-La?’

“But wasn’t their purpose to obtain the Ark of Creation? Shouldn’t they know that you don’t have the Ark of Creation anymore?”

“Their purpose..... From the beginning it wasn’t the Ark of Creation..... It seems.”

“It wasn’t the Ark of Creation?”

“Yes. The knight in black armour..... Took the Hell Stone stored underneath Shangri-La.....”

“Hell Stone? Why?”

“That is..... Why the knight took it..... I don’t know exactly. Along with some powerful demons..... Stepped into the History Crystal..... And left in a hurry.”

‘History Crystal!’

Ark’s eyes flashed. Hundreds of crystals were lined up in the tower. Each one had 10 years of history recorded in it. And this network of crystals was connected to the History Crystal.

‘Alan entered the History Crystal before leaving in a hurry?’

Alan had immediately attacked Shangri-La after Ark left so that was three days ago. And the demonic monsters had invaded Nagaran yesterday. This couldn't be a coincidence.

'Yes, it is simple once I think about it. They must've just discovered that the thing they seek is in Silvana. That means they didn't originally know it was in Silvana. Their purpose in attacking Shangri-La wasn't to obtain the Ark of Creation but to get information!'

And it was likely that the strike against Silvana was organized by Alan. In fact, the coalition who defended the castle had testified that there were users mixed in with the monsters.

'There's no doubt about it. Alan occupied Silvana after getting the information here! Then I can also figure out what he is after!'

"Rest for a while. Purital, Racard, protect him."

Ark who reached a conclusion moved the prophet to a suitable place and ran inside the tower. Despite the shattered tower, the crystals inside were all fine. According to the prophets, the crystals were protected with divine power so it couldn't be broken. After searching the tower for a bit, Ark was able to discover an enormous lump of crystal. It was the History Crystal that all the other ones connected to! Ark belatedly realized something after discovering the crystal.

"How do I use this? Damn, I should've asked the prophet..... Ah. Didn't the prophet say that Alan went into the History Crystal? Then is there a door to enter the crystal?"

Ark had that thought and touched the crystal. At the same time, a message window appeared in front of Ark.

-You have connected to the History Crystal.

Do you want to view the information on the History Crystal?

"What? I can enter just by touching it?"

Ark who read the message instantly nodded and replied.

“Yes!”

Hwaaaaack!

It was at that moment. His body was suddenly sucked into the crystal. He felt like he had been swept into a hurricane as he flew somewhere before the space in front of him brightened.

“Heok! T-this is.....”

Ark’s mouth opened as he looked at the intense light. Before he was standing in front of the crystal and now Ark was in an endless space. Both the floor and sky was covered in space. And in this space were thousands, tens of thousands, hundreds of thousands..... No, an incalculable number of crystal slabs were floating around him.

“No way, all of this.....”

-It is the information contained in the History Crystal.

Suddenly a woman’s voice was heard in his head.

“Heok! W-who?”

-I am a navigation system to help users comfortably search for the information on the History Crystal. You can call me Miss Navi as a nickname in order to feel more comfortable.

A navigation system? It was hidden in a secret sanctuary so wasn’t it too excessive to have a user friendly crystal? Furthermore, she wanted to be called by Miss Navi? Was this a joke? Didn’t she know this was a serious situation? Ark pushed down the desire to say those words.

“Okay, then I will call you Miss Navi. How do I search for the information I want?”

-Just cry out the keyword for the information you are searching for.

“Keyword? Isn’t this similar to searching on the internet? Then.....” Silvana!”

Bang, bang, bang, bang, bang!

At the same time, a huge amount of slabs started gathering. And with a roar they piled up in front of Ark. The pile was dozens of metres high! Ark opened his mouth and murmured absent-mindedly.

“T-this is all the information related to Silvana?”

-That’s right. You can read from the top.

Each slab contained one chapter holding different information.

The [Demons] in the [Dark Century] waged a war against humans in [Nagaran] and after the Dark Century ended, a war between the three kingdoms [Schudenberg], [Bristania] and [Sinis] began. Then came the [Foreigners] as they waged battle over the right to the territory. And the current Lord of [Silvana] is [Ark].

The Silvana territory is 126,785 square metres, the amount of rainfall.....

As expected, the most basic information was recorded in the beginning. But some words written on the slabs caught his attention. They were words marked with [].

“What the? These indications are?”

-They are words that allow you to search for more detailed information. Just press your hand to it and the relevant information will be displayed.

Ark was curious and pressed his hand to the word [Ark]. Then 1 slab flew from the pile.

Character Name Ark Race Human Alignment Good +500 Nobility Title Baron Fame 23,535 (+500) Level 439 Profession Dark Soul Title Cat Knight, Caretaker of the People, Jackson's Hero, Great Adventurer, Magic Institute Member, Seutandal's Hero Health 8,175 (+475) Mana 8,365(+325) Spiritual Power 956 Strength 844 (+34) Agility 1,159 (+170) Stamina 1,389 (+65) Wisdom 185 (+10) Intelligence 1,527 (+25) Luck 209 (+60) Flexibility 268 Art of Communication 79 Affection 129 (+10) Resilience 483 Dark Fog 74 Special stat: Knowledge of Ancient Relics 233 * Equipment item effects Guardian Armour of the Merpeople (Armour): Water Attribute Resistance +100%, Penalty based on water is nullified.

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

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

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

*

Shining Darkness (Two-handed Sword): +10% additional damage against demonic monsters, Agility +20, Stamina +20, Intelligence +20

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

White Tiger's Cloak (Mantle): immune to skills that lower morale, Courage +30%, Agility +30, White Tiger's Roar is available

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

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

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

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

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

* All abilities will increase by 50% in the dark

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

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

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

* Shock absorption is increased by 20%.

* Poison resistance has increased by 50%.

* 10% increased attack and defense.

'That's right. Now I understand how to look for information.'

So Ark started to look through the information about Silvana. But after 1 hour of searching through hundreds of slabs, Ark couldn't find the information that he wanted.

‘Weird. There’s something weird.’

Ark realized that he had been feeling a strange uneasiness. The information in the History Crystal was incredibly detailed. It even had the weather information for Silvana over the last hundreds of years. And if he used the [] indications then he could see for information so detailed it was almost trivial.

‘But the record for Silvana and Nagaran only goes back hundreds of years. It is impossible to search for details prior to that.’

That was exactly the problem. Other areas had records from before the Dark Century. But the information on Silvana and Nagaran only goes back to the Dark Century. To be exact, it connects to the information about the Dark Century. Yet he couldn’t search for any general information about Silvana during the Dark Century. It was like someone had intentionally hidden the records.....

‘Then I should do a more direct keyword search.....’

Alan found something related to the Demonic War. And the last Demonic War was in the Dark Century. Then the information was likely to be on the records about the Dark Century. The problem was he didn’t know what keyword to search for. But he couldn’t just look for the information blindly.

‘Alan left in a hurry after finding the necessary information. Then Alan must’ve known the keyword and searched for that information.’

Then something popped into Ark’s head.

‘Wait? Alan didn’t just come to Shangri-La to search for information. The prophet said that Alan also stole a Hell Stone. Then didn’t that Hell Stone have something to do with Alan and Silvana? Then.....’

“Search, Hell Stone!”

Ark finished thinking and shouted. While he had been searching so far, the related slabs had flown to him. But this time the space suddenly warped. In the next moment, the environment turned black and there was a huge barrier of flames.

“Huk, what is this?”

-A firewall. The information of the keyword you searched for just now is kept in a secured area. You have to enter a password if you want to view the information.

Navi’s voice was heard. Firewall? Password? There really were various things. How could Ark know the password to the firewall? But unlike Navi’s explanation, he didn’t need a password to access the area.

“This.....!”

A small hole caught Ark’s eyes. It was a small area near the bottom of the firewall that had warped. Ark was convinced after he visited the hole.

‘That’s right. The prophet said Alan and some high ranking demons entered the crystal. Then Alan was aware of the existence of the firewall in advance?’

Alan had used the skills of the demons to penetrate the firewall. In other words, the information Alan had been searching for was beyond this firewall. And he could also access the firewall thanks to Alan. Ark quickly passed through the firewall. There was a large room behind the firewall with 10 slabs piled up. Unlike the other slabs, these ones were black.

‘That Alan, he must’ve been in a hurry. To leave a trail like this.....’

Ark instantly checked the slab on top. But when he lifted the slab, there was a sudden noise and he couldn’t check the contents. At the same time, a message window appeared in front of Ark.

-You are lacking the ability to read this information.

<300 Knowledge of Ancient Relics is required to confirm the information. Or 300 points in Hieroglyphic Deciphering. 300 Pursuit of Truth is needed>

“What, what the? I need 300 Knowledge of Ancient Relics to read the information?”

Ark hurriedly checked the other slabs. All the other slabs needed Knowledge of Ancient Relics, Pursuit of Truth or professions like Treasure Hunter or a druid type profession to decipher the information. Fortunately, not all of them required the same level of knowledge.

‘I currently have 233 Knowledge of Ancient Relics. I’ll gather all the slabs I can decipher at the moment. I might now be able to check all the information that Alan searched for but I can put together the general outline.’

Ark organized the 10 slabs based on his Knowledge of Ancient Relics. In the end there was a separate collection of 4 slabs.

‘That is less than half. But it should be enough for the general principles.’

“Now, shall I check Alan’s ulterior motive?”

Ark laughed and touched one of the slabs. Then the slab vibrated and the information appeared in front of him.

-You have found the history hidden behind the History Crystal.

This hidden history is dangerous if leaked outside so the ancient prophets hid it. This hidden history also wasn’t passed down through the prophet clan.

The slab was unsealed and the contents appeared.

“Huh? “What the, this is?”

A baffled exclamation fell from Ark's mouth. The first slab was a map. It showed Seutandal and two other continents that had emerged in the northern oceans of New World. This slab had been hidden a long time ago and Seutandal was marked there so it was probably before the Dark Century. But Nagaran had been strangely marked on the map. He was able to discover the reason after checking the remaining slabs he could read.

.....When the Dark Lord appeared, the boundaries between hell and reality collapsed and the Hell River flooded through the centre of New World. The Hell River spread a powerful curse and strengthened the demonic monsters.....

..... When flooded with the Hell River, the curse is so powerful that no humans can live on that land for the next 60 years. Various demons also used the Hell River as sources of powerful curse magic.....

.....Until the 7 legendary heroes and the 100 heroes used their magic to seal the Hell River deep underneath Nagaran. But the Hell River couldn't be sent back to hell. It could only be sealed underground and a mechanism was created to stop the hell power from floating outside.

.....The 7 legendary heroes and the 100 heroes brought the Hell Stone which controls that hellish power to Shangri-La to be hidden. But the Truth Crystal showed that the Dark Lord would be resurrected one day. And only the foreigners could save this world. The heroes learnt about the crisis in the future and offered their lives to prepare for it.....

"Hell River!"

Ark learnt why Nagaran was marked on the map. That's right. It was because of the Hell River that appeared from the impact of the Dark Lord showing up. And the 7 legendary heroes and 100 heroes sealed the river deep underground in.....

".....Silvana!"

All of Ark's questions was answered with that information. Ark had already seen the Hell River in the lowest floor of Silvana's secret dungeon. But the Hell River he saw had been sealed by the power of the heroes. It was the reason why Nagaran didn't belong to any of the Three Kingdoms after the Dark Century ended. Since the Hell River caused barren land for 60 years, none of the kingdoms had asserted

their rights to Nagaran. Then after 60 years passed, the Three Kingdoms began a war for control of Nagaran. But that was not the problem. The 7 legendary heroes and 100 veterans weren't able to completely seal the Hell River. So they made a device that ensured Nagaran's safety for hundreds of years. And the key to that device was the Hell Stone! After confirming the information about the Hell River, he had seized the Hell Stone and disappeared. He didn't need to check the rest of the slabs to determine Alan's goal.

"Oh my god! He wants to flood Nagaran again with the Hell River!"

Ark's face turned white and terrified. Ark had thought he could recover Silvana after the Demonic War. But if the Hell River was unsealed then nobody could live on that land for 60 years. If he calculated it in real time, 60 years was 20 years. It would be the end of Silvana if the Hell River flooded. In addition, the Hell River was like the sphere of influence in that it strengthened curse magic and turned normal monsters into demons. He didn't know how big, but it would have a tremendous impact on the Demonic War.

'There's no time to waste. I have to stop Alan!'

Ark left the firewall and shouted.

"Miss Navi, what is the method to exit the History Crystal?"

-Just shout 'End.'

"Okay. E....."

Ark stopped as he was about to exit the crystal. The History Crystal contained information about all the history and people of New World.

'Then I might be able to figure out the reason for Alan's strange strength!'

"Information search, Alan!"

Ark used Alan as a keyword. And one slab came flying. Alan's information was contained on the slab.

".....What, what the? Ruin Knight? Then Alan is the Ruin Knight?"

Ark muttered as he read the information. Alan was originally a Holy Knight. Of course, Lariette had become an Innocence Knight so he knew that Alan must've changed professions. But he never imagined that Alan would change to a Ruin Knight. Ark had originally guessed that the Red Man was the Ruin Knight.

'Damn, after searching Alan I was going to look for information about the Red Man and Ruin Knight..... Yet Alan and the Ruin Knight was the same person.'

He also didn't know the name of the Red Man so he couldn't search for information.

'By the way, isn't something odd? Alan can't be more than level 400. Even if he got the Hate Aura from the Hate Set, how did he manage to match my dark attribute bonus?'

Ark tried to search for information about the 'Ruin Knight's skills'. But the message window stated that the keyword didn't exist.

'It would've been helpful to know but I guess it isn't possible. I have no more time for this!

"End search!"

Ark's body moved towards the sky and he exited the History Crystal. The prophet was dead after he left the tower.

"The prophet died suddenly after Master entered.

Racard said while scratching his ears. However, he had no time to mourn the death of the prophet.

“Radun, transform to Radunma!” Head back to Silrinad!”

Ssak ssak ssak, ssak ssak ssak ssak!

Radunma once again ran across the snowfield. At that moment Ark still couldn’t imagine. The fearful contents recorded on the slabs that Ark couldn’t confirm.....