

## Ark Vol 3 Chapter 2

Hear ye, hear ye! All residents ye Japtem Kingdom!

Our Overlord feels heartbroken for not being able to supply her people with the dose of Moonlight Sculptor on time, so as compensation, she has arranged for this chapter to be released early. Long live the Overlord!

(Ha! What a fake. I will never bow down to you insolent quack of an Overlord. I am close to achieving my goal. All I need is a trigger. A trigger to set off a sudden panic in the Kingdom. And while your elite troops are trying to calm down the people, I will find you and assassinate you. My dream will be complete. I will become the new Overlord! Oh you poor soon-to-be ex-Overlord. No worries, I will make you the people will remember you as the worst Overlord in history and as a dictator. You should thank me in advance!)

To Jackson Castle

'Ah, this is bad. It's an absolute LARA zone.'

[T/N: LARA is Licensed Agency for Relief of Asia, meaning that Ark's surroundings look like a disaster zone.]

Fruit of Basium

- Due to the Fruit of Basium, Alamone Larvae has started metamorphosis.

A new skill registration window for Alamone Larvae has been formed.

Alamone Larvae can learn a new skill through the process of metamorphosis. However, the summoner must find out what kind of skill it is and how to learn it. You have a time limit of 20 days. If you cannot complete metamorphosis by that time, it will end in failure.

During the transformation process all of Alamone Larvae's skills are sealed; as such, it will lose its item storage ability.

"Kekeke, I will kill all humans."

He suddenly heard the sounds of someone being attacked from the rear of the wreckage.

Setting aside his thinking for now, he quieted his footsteps and went back to see a wounded NPC crew member. He was surrounded by three black monsters that Ark had seen from within the ship.

'There were surviving crew members?' Ark examined the monsters by using Eyes of the Cat.

They were naked black humanoid monsters, with a faces as smooth as that of egg demons, white pupils, and pierced lips. They were monsters that would come out of a horror movie promo poster; level 80 monsters named Shadow.

On the other hand, Ark's level was currently 68. But thanks to the Dark Fog's influence, the land was covered in darkness.

Within the darkness was the Dark Walker's battlefield!

His dark attribute bonus and the Gift of Darkness, gave him a 30% stat increase. Converted to levels, that was a whopping 20, so one could say Ark's current level was equivalent to 88.

This was the real power of the dark attribute.

When he was a beginner, it was hard to notice any great changes. However, attribute bonuses like this showed a greater effect the higher one's level was. At level 3, it was only a difference of 1 level, but at level 300, it was a difference of 100 levels!

"With this much, it's definitely worth a try!"

Ark immediately used 'Stealth,' approached a Shadow monster from behind, and then attacked at the nape of its neck.

- You have dealt a Critical Hit! As a bonus effect, Backstab will deal an additional 200% damage. Shadow will be stunned for 10 seconds.

'So this is why they say you shouldn't even drink cold water in front of kids...'

[T/N: Many Koreans believe that drinking cold water is unhealthy. Basically, don't do unadvisable things in front of kids, because they'll start emulating those actions.]

Hero Assembly!

\* Sub-quest: Rescue the Silver Arrow Crewmen

Difficulty: E

Gauntlets of Strength (Magic)

Armor Type

Steel Gloves

Defense

50

Durability

3/60

Weight

50

Usage Restriction

Level 60, Warrior

High-quality steel gauntlets sold in the Merchant City, Giran, and specialized stores. Although they are mass produced, the seams are soft and have high defense, so they are loved by many adventurers. During the process of smelting the iron, drops of Ogre's blood were added to give an effect adding to the wearer's Strength.

Norad Boots (Magic)

Armor Type

Leather Shoes

Defense



35



Durability



4/40



Weight



20



Usage Restriction



Level 65 or higher

Boots made from the leather of a legendary horse that only inhabits the northern region. They are among the masterpiece armor series made by the famous armor maker 'Norad,' who is known to have disappeared long ago. As fast as a gust of wind, the legendary horse's strength still remains, giving an increase to the wearer's movements.

\* The sub-quest 'Rescue the Silver Arrow's Crewmen' has been completed.

"Have you been well?"

"Haha, I can't really say that..." The Lord smiled weakly and sagged his shoulders. "Anyway, you have come."

"How could I not come after hearing that Jackson Castle has met a crisis?"

"Indeed."

The Lord nodded with a heartbroken expression. "It is as you said. The situation is very serious. Since you have arrived, you must have been riding the airship sent from Giran. Am I right?"

"Yes, it was dangerous because we were intercepted during our journey, but I was somehow able to survive to Jackson Castle."

"I see, even after suffering many difficulties, thank you for not giving up on Jackson and coming. As your friend and as the Lord of Jackson Castle, I express my thanks to you. My heartfelt thanks go to the brave Warriors who were sacrificed while participating in the militia."

Comfortable. The first feeling Ark registered while talking face to face with the Lord was comfort. Ark did not feel the slightest pretense in the young Lord's tone. If a person did something worth being grateful

about, he expressed his heartfelt thanks, and he sincerely sympathized with those who perished. It was such a natural response, but the same natural reaction was hard to find among players. Maybe because this was a game, it was considered acceptable to not act earnest.

But perhaps because Ark hadn't been able to experience many virtual reality games, there were many times when NPCs felt like real people. Was that why? Now he was more comfortable talking to NPCs than to users. Unlike unpredictable users, conversation with NPCs unfurled in orderly fashions. At least he didn't need to worry about what to say to them.

"Your words alone are surely enough to comfort the fallen, my Lord."

"That is all I can do. In any case, the crash of your airship is an incident that explains Jackson's current situation. After all, we weren't able to send out rescue parties despite knowing your airship was intercepted. Furthermore the airship was not the only one that took a surprise attack."

"Not only the Silver Arrow?"

"As you likely know, all three great guilds come forward and sent militia to Jackson. The 3 great guilds mobilized their most superior weapons. However, they were all defeated one by one while on route like the airship."

The young Lord began to explain the gist of the situation.

The unidentified army of monsters attacked Jackson Castle 2 days ago, which was 16 hours ago, last evening, in real time. The sky was suddenly engulfed by Dark Fog as the army of darkness attacked. Without any time to take control, they were dealt a huge blow.



"Many of the foreigners who were dedicated to hunting around Jackson Castle perished. Still, the good thing was that the foreigners who survived combined their strength with the Soldiers and finally blocked the attack. Then, before we were completely engulfed in the Dark Fog, we urgently sent an SOS from the Magic Tower to Giran."

That was the magic signal Ark saw in Giran.

The 3 great guilds all received requests for help. They responded quickly and decided to send militia. The first to arrive were the ones sent by the Merchant Guild. The representatives of the Merchant Guild cut through the Jackson principality aboard the ironclad merchant ship, Prize. After getting close to Jackson Castle, they planned on beginning their large-scale landing operation.

"So they failed."

"That's right, it seems that the monsters knew that the SOS was sent from the magic tower. As soon as the Prize crossed into the Jackson principality boundaries, they were ambushed by the monsters lying in wait and sank. Among the 100 militia on board, 60 or so were lost with Prize, and just this morning, some 40 survivors arrived."

As expected, not all who participated could reach Jackson Castle. There was a trial prepared for each guild, and only those who passed could participate in the actual quest.

The Merchant Guild and Magic Institute were both in Giran, so the level of the militia was similar. That's why the number of survivors from the airship was also similar to the number from Prize.

"Then the Warrior Guild's militia must have also received a surprise attack."

"Yes, but fortunately, the Warrior guild did not receive much damage. Though they were ambushed, 70 survived and arrived at Jackson a few hours ago. They say it's thanks to the famous Warrior who led the battle. He's the Holy Knight, Alan, who we've heard of several times even in Jackson Castle."

"Alan!"

Ark's felt like his mind was splashed with cold water.

Alan... His name was unforgettable in another sense than Andel's. Ever since Ark met him, he had felt an ever present thorn of discomfort in playing the game.

He was the first to make Ark feel so frustrated. He was also the one who had made Ark feel like Lariette had been snatched from him. And he was the reason why he took the first step towards being a gamer for a living.

'So that guy is also participating in this quest!'

He had encountered competition in an totally unexpected place.

His feelings were mixed after hearing Alan's name. He knew an opportunity like this would come one day, and as candidates of Global Exos, it was unavoidable anyways. However, Ark was not yet ready to compete one on one with him.

Not yet... That's right, it wasn't time.

If they met when he wasn't ready, it was very likely that Ark would just come to feel the same frustration as before. The stronger Ark's desire to win against him was, the greater his frustration would be.

"Besides, if Lariette is still with Alan..."

More than anything, he didn't want to be humiliated again in front of Lariette.

As Ark's expression became grave, the young Lord asked with a quizzical voice, "Do you know him?"

"Yes, a little..."

"I see. Then I'll continue what I was saying. Raymond is reorganizing the militia sent by the 3 Great Guilds to form a temporary force to guard the exterior. Sir Alan has been put in charge of commanding them on the field."

"Entrusted to Alan?"

"He is a Holy Knight recognized by the Cathedral. It should come as no surprise considering the Fame he has garnered."

This was why users were obsessed with Fame.

If your Fame was high, then you didn't really have to bother with raising Intimacy. With Fame alone, you received VIP treatment no matter where you went, and there were cases where NPCs went looking for you after hearing rumors to request quests. In addition, you could also be personally bestowed a title from a famous guilds or royalty. Whether you had it or not, it was an absolutely necessary

value for Knights, Merchants, and professions like Scholar alike in progressing through the game.

The main characteristic of Ark's chosen hidden profession, Dark Walker, was the dark attribute bonus. Meanwhile, Alan's main characteristics as a Holy Knight were Faith and Fame. Disregarding his original character, Alan was a faithful, sacred Knight in the game. Therefore, even by doing the same quest as other people, Alan received bonus Faith and Fame.

Faith showed its power when dealing with monsters, and Fame could win the right to be entrusted an advantageous role when a big event like this occurred.

'If he's registered as a commander in the system, he'll get more contribution points and experience points as a bonus. Damn, does that mean it'll be hard to win more contribution points than Alan in this quest?'

This was a fact Ark had learned recently learned, but the path of darkness the Dark Walker tread was the opposite of Alan's-- Ark suffered a Fame penalty. It was intended to balance his profession.

However, Ark was able to obtain almost as much Fame as other users thanks to successful miraculous treatment with Nursing.

'There's no point in thinking of such things now. All I have to do is raise my Dark Walker my own way. Just as our chosen paths are different, there may be things I can do that Alan can't.'

"Sir Alan failed the Taresha Labyrinth expedition twice, so his Fame isn't as great as before, but there was still no one in the volunteer

troops who can match him. Also, he is working as hard as we expected."

'So he failed that time when he said he was going to the Taresha Labyrinth!'

Ark was able to receive unexpected information from the young Lord.

If so, then Alan wouldn't have been able to raise his level and Fame by much. That in and of itself was good news, but Alan would be desperate to make up for the failure with this event quest. Looking at this quest alone, he couldn't say it was really good news.

"Well, Sir Alan's situation aside, this is the current line of defense. After conferring with Sir Alan, we put the volunteer troops in the defense line."

The young Lord called attention to himself and spoke while pointing at a map of the Jackson principality.

Alan split the volunteer troops into 3 groups. He assigned group 1 to the front gate, where the enemy attacks were the fiercest. Group 1 was likely the one Alan was personally leading. Groups 2 and 3 were placed on the sides to assist group 1.

'With this placement, Alan and group 1 will definitely get the most contribution.'

Was that all? Giving and denying contribution points to each group or user all depended on Alan's whims. Of course his first priority was going to be himself. Alan had seized the top spot right from the get go of the event quest with his high Fame.

'Alan...'

While participating in the quest, Ark had never even hoped to take the top spot. But after finding out there was no chance at all, he lost all motivation. What's more, to think his opponent was Alan...

Besides the volunteer troops, a group called the militia were participating. The militia was comprised of users who were in Jackson at the time of the ambush; they got the event quest from the young Lord and not from the 3 Great Guilds. But since they were all low level, they were being used as reserve troops.

"The assignment of the volunteers has been entrusted to Sir Alan, but you are an exception. Speak if there's a group you desire. I will confer with Sir Alan to make it so that you are assigned the group you want."

Ark briefly looked at the map and pondered.

Considering EXP and contribution points, group 1 was the best. But the commander of group 1 was Alan; even if Ark couldn't obtain a decent reward, he couldn't find it in himself to take orders from Alan.

Groups 2 and 3 were also in a similar situation, as they were also under Alan's direct command. In addition, even if he were assigned to the front lines, it would be difficult to gain the contribution he needed if he wasn't put in an attack squad. Furthermore, if he ran into Andel or Bulma, there was no telling what the outcome would be.

Whichever he chose, neither were desirable.

'Is there a way I can raise my contribution while fighting independently?'

After thinking a while, Ark asked the young Lord, "Where are the castle troops fighting?"

"The Sylphid Knights left the defense of the front gate to the volunteer troops and are out blockading the enemy's supply line. Defense isn't everything-- striking the enemy is the true mission of the Sylphid Knights. The Jackson guards are guarding the back gate."

'That's it!' Ark's eyes flashed.

Jackson's soldiers were NPCs. If he were to fight alongside them, he wouldn't need to worry about Andel or other users. He also wouldn't have to worry about being sandwiched in the midst of many users and would have many chances to gain EXP and contribution points.

Regretfully, the scenario of hunting with the Sylphid Knights was not to be. Well, if the powerful Sylphid Knights participated in the defense line, there would be a problem with the quest difficulty balance. However, the Jackson guards were also NPCs that Ark was very familiar with.

"I would like to guard the back gate along with the Jackson guards."

"You will?"

"Yes, as you probably know, I am well acquainted with the Jackson Soldiers. Rather than mixing with strangers, I would be more comfortable with the Jackson guards with whom I have shared my heart."

"But... The back gate they are currently guarding is not a very safe place. The number of enemies and frequency of attacks are low compared to the front gate, where monsters attack relentlessly, but

there are only 30 Jackson guards left. Compared to the main gate which is being guarded by about 140 volunteer troops, the back gate is more dangerous."

"My Lord." Ark gazed at the young Lord with blazing eye and spoke forcefully. "Jackson Castle is a second home to me. In addition, you called me a friend, my Lord. How can I desire safety when Jackson Castle is in the midst of a crisis? If protecting Jackson Castle is dangerous, then that is fine. Even if I were to perish while guarding it, that is what I desire. I beg you, please let me do so."

"Ark, you're really.....!" The young Lord struggled with his emotions.

Even the guard captain, Cross, who was listening in from the side was overcome with emotion.

"Milord, I also ask this favor. If the righteous foreigner Ark who was acknowledged by the late lord were to help, it would raise the morale of the guards. Please grant this request. I will swear to protect him from harm."

"Fine, although a foreigner participating in the guard force is unprecedented, Ark fought the devil with the Sylphid Knights before. And if it's you, who loves Jackson more than anyone, you have the right to do so. Sir Cross, Ark is my friend. I leave him to you."

"Yes, sir."

As Cross firmly nodded, a message window popped up.

- Art of Communication has risen by 5.