

Ark Vol 7 C 1

Chapter 1

ACT 1 Magic Detection

-‘Slime’s Immortality Pill’s mixing process has been completed.

-You have entered the 2nd stage crystallization process.

Now that you have completely mixed the ingredients together, you must make a decision. This process requires the same amount of concentration that a blacksmith uses to extract good quality iron from iron ores. If the fire is too strong then the ingredients will oxidize and the immortality pill will fail, but if the fire is too weak then the crystallization won’t be accomplished well.

= Crystallization process, time remaining: 6 hours

‘Huck, 6 hours? Are they trying to kill me?’

He couldn’t resist his impatience to start the immortality pill. After 30 hours of non-stop hunting! It was a situation where he was so tired that he could fly to Andromeda at any time. Then he had to frantically shake the pot for 2 hours. If he moved away during that time then all his efforts would be undone. He didn’t have a choice. But after 2 hours, now he had to watch the pot and adjust the fire for 6 hours. It was the most irritating poisonous message window! His anger flared up and he felt murderous. No, he felt like his life was being threatened.

Now when someone died because of online games, it wasn’t a newsworthy event anymore. But this game wanted him to die from overworking? It was an irresponsible message window that didn’t consider the user’s health and would drive them to death.....even though he wanted to argue, there was no one that would listen. System messages were an absolute law in online gaming. A few times other online games also had similar situations. They didn’t want to regret abandoning it and would continue to the extent they would get tired and die. It started with thoughts like ‘It is simple to end this when I want’ or ‘I’ve met a like-minded party but I’ll do a little more.’ However, when they had to spend

a few hours at work they would start to feel nervous and would begin to play all night. That was how they became addicted to the game.

‘Who can I blame?’

He only had himself to blame for starting the immortality pill too eagerly..... But now that he started it, he had to see it through to the end!

“Okay, I’m going to make the best immortality pill possible!”

Ark stared at the pot with bloodshot eyes.

“Ugh, it increasingly turning red. Temperature down to 20 degrees.....eh? Did I doze off for a moment? Huck, it’s brown. When did the temperature go down? Increase by 10 degrees! Damn, did I raise it too much? Why is it so overheated so quickly? Go down 5 degrees. No, 3 degrees down.”

If he had to move his body then he would rather hunt. If he was careless for even a short moment when staring at the pot then his spirit would begin to sail to Andromeda. Thanks to his sleepiness, his mind was so muddled that it was difficult for him to distinguish between a dream and reality. But he had invested considerable time and money into this. It wasn’t possible for him to fail just before the end. He clenched his teeth and held on until a message window popped up.

-The 2nd stage crystallization process is finished.

You have entered the 3rd stage maturation process.

This is the final step in creating the Slime’s Immortality Pill. The only thing left is to let it mature long enough to draw out 100% of the effect from each ingredient. Make sure to seal it up completely, avoid any direct sunlight and keep it in a cool, dry place.

= Maturation process, time remaining: 64 hours

“I did it.....I’m getting paid!”

Now he didn’t have to stare at the pot anymore. Seeing the information window was as wonderful as if he had received a rare item. Ark sealed the pot and quickly put it in his personal safe. Then he made sure to firmly lock up the cabin. The NPCs that brought him gifts could leave it in the open in the meantime.

‘Now I have to organize the remaining japtem and go to sleep.’

It was currently evening in New World and if he went to sleep then it was likely that all the stores would be closed when he connected again. Because most shops would be closed, he had to empty his bag in advance. However when he visited the general store, the door was already shut.

‘What’s going on? It normally isn’t closed this early.....’

When he looked around he saw that the smithy operated by a raccoon was still slightly open. But his 30% discount in Lancel Village only applied for Galen at the general store. In addition, since there was no specific profession then he would buy all the japtem.

‘If I sell it to other stores then there would be a 50 silver difference.’

Ark forced his eyes open and went to search for Galen. Fortunately, he was able to quickly discover Galen. However the atmosphere was dark. Outside the village, Galen was having a serious talk with Hanson while sighing.

“Galen ajusshi.”

“Ah, Ark!”

“What’s going on?”

“Well, that’s.....”

Galen and Hanson hesitated. Then Sarah grasped Ark’s hands and pointed. On the outskirts of Lancel Village was a big field, where most of New World’s crops could only be harvested twice a year. Lancel Village had become self-sufficient thanks to that field. But the field crops that Sarah pointed to seemed to be in fairly bad condition, even from Ark’s inexperienced eyes.

“Why are the crops so withered?”

“Because of all the residents that left, it looks like it has been neglected for too long. Since the management wasn’t proper, the harvest is in bad shape.”

Galen sighed and replied.

“I never even considered it. When I accepted the 300 residents that you brought, the upcoming harvest season was approaching so I thought the food situation would get better. But our crop isn’t good this year.....I don’t know how we’re going to handle the upcoming hard winter.”

In New World, users also had to eat to live. If the satiety fell then they would receive various penalties and if it went down too low then the user would die. It was the same for NPCs. No, it would be an even more serious problem since this world is reality to the NPCs. Then he heard a rough voice from one side.

“Hey, this is my field!”

“What the? I’ve been planting here for ages. Nobody stopped me when I carried water to these fields.”

“So it’s yours just because you put your hand on it?”

“How long do you think it has been in my family?”

“How would I know?”

“This bastard, do you think I would just give it to you?”

The farmers who were shouting eventually grabbed each other’s collars.

“Guys, what is with this shameful conduct? Stop immediately! Since things are difficult, shouldn’t we put aside our pride and help each other?”

Galen ran up to them and shouted in a pained voice.

Just like any other village, the pioneers of Lancel Village also took ownership of the fields. However, the strong sense of community didn’t distinguish between what belonged to each other.

They produced it together and used it together. That was the way of Lancel Village. However, it was difficult to avoid in an emergency situation. Since the situation was difficult, they only cared about their own greed and there were endless conflicts. This was the reason that Galen had closed the general store and headed to the fields. The only person who could mediate between the migrants settled here was the temporary chief Galen.

“Is a handful of food so important that you would grab at each other’s necks? And shame the village in front of our benefactor Ark?”

“Benefactor?”

The farmer raised his head and glared at Ark.

“What benefactor.....didn’t he make things in the village more difficult by bringing a bandit group or something? It if wasn’t for them then we wouldn’t be so pressed for a good harvest. We’re the ones in this difficult situation because of him!”

“Hey. What are you saying? Ark.....!”

Galen jumped in surprise. However, the farmer didn't want to hear and turned his head, spitting.

"Anyway, our problems aren't for the eyes of foreigners."

'What's this?'

Bewilderment spread on Ark's face at the farmer's reaction. His intimacy with Lancel Village was the highest possible. Therefore he couldn't imagine a resident showing such behaviour in front of Ark. But while he was hunting the ingredients for 'Slime's Immortality Pill,' he didn't pay any attention to what was happening in town so his reputation fell. No, that was the second problem. Ark checked the information in the village town hall with Galen.

The food situation has reduced by 10%. Unity has also been reduced by 10%.

Commerce, industry and armament has also been reduced by 8%.

2 of the village residents have left because of a feud.

Galen related the information from the last days in the village. All of the figures related to village growth were at the bottom. It was a natural result since they were lacking food, an essential condition for survival

'Is this a usual problem?'

Ark weighed the severity of the problem. His reputation wasn't the problem. Ark owned a house in Lancel Village. If there was trouble with the village development then the real estate market would also decline. His plan to make a killing in real estate might be falling apart! And if Lancel Village became impoverished again then it would be difficult to receive decent compensation for the quest that he worked so hard on. Ark's voice became desperate.

“Is there any other ways?”

“We could buy food from somewhere else. But since we’ve built a lot of houses these days and invested money in fixing the roads, our financial status isn’t very good. If our crop conditions don’t get better than this winter is going to be a lot harder.”

Galen shook his head with a regretful face.

“It’s also because 300 people suddenly showed up.”

“We can’t assume it is the only reason.....”

“What other reasons are there?”

“The biggest problem is that the field is ravaged after being left alone for too long. And there are also a lot of monsters around. When there are a lot of monsters, the number of wild animals decreases so hunting becomes harder.”

Ark had also seen the monsters in the vicinity of Lancel Village.

“Can we catch the monsters to eat?”

“Most of the monsters in the Argus Mountains are poisonous. If it isn’t cooked well then it could be life-threatening. Would we rather be hungry or poisoned?”

“That’s a big deal.”

“It isn’t possible. I’ll ask you to consult with the Meow and hunt rabbit and venison for the moment. Since the food is scarce, we must figure out a way to procure it from Jackson. You must be very worried. Unlike the winter and spring harvest, in autumn we can prepare iron since the current price should rise.....”

Galen sighed. Ark also couldn't stop sighing. He was now in an inseparable relationship with Lancel Village. If the village was in a tough situation then Ark would also receive several disadvantages.

'Well, in this circumstance it wouldn't be possible to see edible meat at a high price.....'

When the food situation becomes even worse, then the town's financial situation would become devastated. However, the food situation was not Ark's only problem. The population of Lancel Village was already 700 people. He could hunt wild animals for its meat. However, the food situation would only improve by 1%.

"If only there was Yggdrasil's protection....."

Then he heard a voice sighing from the back. When he turned around, one of the raccoon representatives was talking with a melancholy face.

"Even if we didn't have abundant light, we never had to worry about food at least. My great father was indebted to Yggdrasil's protection. After I've experience the outside world, I realized again how important that protection was. If only I can go back to that place....."

The raccoon clan representatives that came to the town hall bowed their heads. When the village's situation became worse, the raccoon clan became homesick for the Underground World. When he heard that even the raccoons wanted to leave the village, Galen's face darkened even more. However, Ark pricked up his ears.

'Yggdrasil!'

Yes, the patron of the Underground World! It was in accordance with the covenant where the raccoons keep the secret of the seal while their world was protected by Yggdrasil. But what if such a presence existed in Lancel Village? That was the thought that flashed in Ark's head.

'Popo is the seed of Yggdrasil. When Popo is planted near Lancel Village then he might cause the same effect. No, the only thing is to believe it!'

So far he had delayed the quest because of the Slime's Immortality Pill! Now he had to urgently solve the quest.

'But the residents are leaving. The cause of all the problems is the food shortage. Completing the quest will solve that but for the moment I need to put out the sudden fire. Yes, JusticeMan ajusshi and the NPCs at the camp should stay clear for a little bit.'

Once Ark organized his japtem he went to visit JusticeMan.

".....Well, I have actually been concerned about the situation for a while. We're trying to make sure that the residents of Lancel Village don't suffer any damage because of us. Alright, for the moment we'll hunt wild animals even if we have to go far away to hunt the hippos.

Ark who had made progress cut off the connection at once. Since he had stayed awake for 36 hours, heavy fatigue hit as soon as he left the unit.

Hyun-woo screamed and opened his eyes. And he glanced around for a while with a bemused look. There was mould on the gutters, an old wardrobe, a 15 inch TV and a computer set. His virtual reality unit was located in this room and didn't match the dismal surroundings. It was Hyun-woo's room which he paid rent for every month. After a while, Hyun-woo sighed and stood up.

'Phew, it was just a specific dream.'

His clothes were soaked in sweat. When he thought about it, it was a really scary dream. When his mother was hungry, he was forced to cry..... Since the age of 17, Hyun-woo dedicated his life to his ailing mother. To Hyun-woo, hungry and poverty wasn't a horrible thing. No, not being able to provide

for his hungry mother was more terrifying than being chased by a ghost or demon. After suffering through 36 hours of the 'Slime's Immortality Pill' and then hearing about the bad situation of Lancel Village, it was no wonder that he had a nightmare after falling asleep. It was only 4 a.m. and he had only slept for 3 hours, but after the nightmare he didn't want to go back to sleep. He decided to leave for the gym in one hour. Hyun-woo washed quickly before sitting down in front of the computer.

"Should I take a look at today's current prices before leaving?"

Hyun-woo connected to the auction site. He consistently sold 2 items a week and had steadily made 1.5 million won. That was 6 million won a month. Since he had to pay a 7% handling charge, the auction site got 420,000 won a month. Thanks to this, his ratings rose quickly and the other day he became a gold member. A gold membership offered many advantages. There was a 1% discount on the fee and information windows about the various items were also provided. This could be useful when trying to determine the selling price, as it listed the fluctuations in the price during the past month.

-The auction has been completed. Crystal Golem's Head: 800,000 won.

-The auction has been completed. Bracelet of Strength: 450,000.

-The auction has been completed. Heavy iron sword: 1,800,000 won.

-The auction has been completed. Deluxe repair box (4): 480,000 won.....

'Except for the Heavy Iron Sword, all the prices are similar.'

Hyun-woo sighed after checking the auction results. The average level of the users had risen by a lot. The sale price for items lower than level 60 was steadily decreasing. On the other hand, the price was increasing for items over level 70. It was the reason why the heavy iron sword, which sold for 1,300,000 won in the past was now sold for 1,800,000 won. But recently Hyun-woo could not sell high level items. No, if he looked at the items he obtained. The unique "Gladiator's Honour" or the rare ring 'Mind's Eye' for example.....would be able to earn him several million won. However, both those items were necessary for Hyun-woo. In online gaming, it was common sense to keep the better items first in order to get stronger. He couldn't blindly sell it just to obtain money.

‘When combining all the items sold this month, isn’t the profit around 4,000,000 won?’

When he checked the ledger on his computer, he saw that it was 4,700,000 won. Thanks to his Magic Restoration reaching the advanced level, he sold some of the deluxe repair boxes that he didn’t need as well as some of his potion collection. There were a few items that weren’t sold at a reasonable price, but overall it wasn’t a bad profit.

‘But it isn’t enough to pay the hospital bills.’

Hyun-woo needed 5,210,000 won every month to pay the medical expenses. It was average. If there was a sudden unscheduled medical treatment, the bill could go over 6,000,000 won.

Fortunately, there was a surplus in his bankbook thanks to the ‘Fire Slayer.’ But if the next month was ordinary like this then it would become difficult.

‘But now I have a full set of bracelets, rings, necklace and shoulder blades. It would be possible to sell items from now on. But I still have to tighten the belt a little bit more. I have to hunt hard and strong.’

Since his life was tight, he had to make money or die. But no matter how difficult his situation was, Hyun-woo never thought that it was unfair. If it was 5 years ago, he probably wouldn’t have been able to last. Since he didn’t know when his mother would be released from the hospital. However, Hyun-woo was not the thoughtless child of 5 years ago. He had seen many people at the hospital. Among them, he saw the pain of parents or siblings who didn’t have enough money. It might be cowardly, but Hyun-woo felt a sense of solace after watching them cry.

‘I will endure it. I now have money to treat my mother and she is looking better. Now is not the time to sound weak!’

He didn’t know the importance of his father’s existence until he lost him. So he was happy to be able to do something for his mother. He could survive with rice for meals and play the game all night if it meant making enough money for the hospital bills. More.....a little more.....he wanted his mother to be happy.

‘To do that, I have to make money even more fiercely. I can’t be short even ten thousand won.’

He had everything he needed to achieve this. Hyun-woo scoured the site with bloodshot eyes. It was important to grasp the current market price of items in the game.

‘There still isn’t a trading group for food ingredients.’

In New World, it was rare for people to earnestly learn how to cook. And because ingredients were sold in general stores, there was nobody like Ark who wanted unique ingredients. Only ingredients like the Mandragora which could be used as a magic ingredient were rarely sold. But he would rather save money and cook his own dishes.

‘If there was no expiration date on cooking then I would be able to sell it.....’

The only trouble was that it was a survival cooking dish. Even if he needed expensive spices, the ingredient cost was cheaper than a potion with the same effect but because it was a food, there was an expiration date. Of course, since it was an advanced dish then the expiration date was quite long, however since the dish could become bad when taking the time sold through the auction site in consideration, not many people were willing to spend gold on it.

‘I wonder if there are any ingredients that have a preservative effect?’

Hyun-woo clicked his tongue and searched all over the site. His alarm clock suddenly went off and signalled that it was 4.30 a.m.

Bang, bang, bang!

A booming sound rang out as the mat shook. Hyun-woo experienced the wrestling technique where an arm closed around his neck before he was thrown to the ground. But he had already become used to such pain. Hyun-woo got up and blocked the opponent's incoming arm. If he was the same as before, his opponent would've counterattacked immediately. However, since he strengthened his lower body the opponent couldn't easily use techniques against him. It was a tense match against a National Championship bronze medallist.

"Ha, isn't he doing quite well?"

"He's not tackled so easily anymore."

"Is he really trying wrestling for the first time?"

The SWAT team members swarmed and expressed their admiration. Then Lee Myung-ryong snorted and muttered.

"Bah, he should be able to do this much after sparring every day."

"Hey, that's different. Would any thug be able to learn so quickly just by sparring under master every day?"

"In your own words. He is able to face off against great athletes who have participated in the nationals."

"Shut up, what do you understand? Your standards are at a childish level. Don't you exercise? Would you like to be hit by a knife when you're dispatched?"

"Sheesh, I won't say anything else....."

After Lee Myung-ryong threatened them, the members immediately scattered.

'Certainly.....'

Lee Myung-ryong stared at Hyun-woo. To be honest, he secretly admired him. Of course, Hyun-woo was still a novice at fighting against opponents. The fight would probably be over in 1 minute. But even so, the growth of Hyun-woo was remarkable. After he made Hyun-woo train in boxing, wrestling and taekwondo, now he had to learn how to apply it to his whole body. Boxing was not about hitting the opponent with only arm strength. The action for a punch should naturally come from the waist and footwork. It was the same for wrestling and taekwondo as well. If he didn't take advantage of the whole body then the technique wouldn't be used correctly.

'Even though he is foolish, he has noticed it.....'

Even though martial arts could be understood with the mind, it wasn't easy to apply it to the body. Only a large amount of practice and actual fighting would engrave it into the body. But Hyun-woo had learnt the trick after only one month. He had thought Hyun-woo was useable since the first time they met, but it was really beyond expectations. He played all day long and still managed it.

'Who knew that I had such a discerning eye for talent?'

But Lee Myung-ryong soon shook his head and smiled.

'I'm not the one that caused all that talent to emerge.'

Then what was?

'Isn't the answer obvious?'

Besides eating and sleeping, Hyun-woo spent all his time in the game. Thus, his skills seemed to increase every time he appeared at the gym. If so, the answer was the virtual reality game.....he didn't know what it was, but the secret would be there.

'The atmosphere around Hwa-rang hyung-nim also changed after he started the game.....what is it about that virtual reality game?'

While Lee Myung-ryong was thinking, the third round of the wrestling match ended. It was followed by leg exercises and Hyun-woo sparring in taekwondo.

“Teacher, I’ll stop now.”

“Sure. But why wasn’t your steps natural today? Is there something wrong?”

“Just a little bit.....I’m not in good condition today.”

“A young guy should have better condition.....take more care.”

“Yes.”

Hyun-woo nodded and was about to leave the gym.

“By the way.....you and Hwa-rang hyung-nim are playing a virtual reality game called New World right?”

“Is Teacher also interested in the game?”

“No interest.....I’m going now.”

Lee Myung-ryong made up an excuse with an embarrassed face. But as soon as Hyun-woo left, he headed straight towards a nearby virtual reality gaming room.

‘What is it about New World that made Hyun-woo improve as well as Gwon Hwa-rang change his movement so much? Is it different from the other games I’ve played?’

Lee Myung-ryong’s nature couldn’t endure the curiosity. That was the reason why he headed to the game room. After thinking and pacing in front of the room for a while, Lee Myung-ryong finally entered.

'I'll never know unless I look for myself.'

So a former member of the national Taekwondo team and a current SWAT team leader was about to step foot in New World.....

"Captain, there have been orders from the headquarters!"

"Sheesh that killed the timing. Alright. Summon the team together and wait."

.....It would take some time until he could try it out.

'So I have a cold?'

After he had a nightmare, he wasn't in very good condition. He seemed fine when exercising at the gym, but after he came home his body started drooping. There was also a headache quietly building. However, Ark returned to New World.

The money earned from just one day playing New World was around 250,000 won. If he was absent for just one day then he would lose 250,000 won.

'I'm not going to give up 250,000 won just because of a cold!'

When he returned to Lancel Village, the environment was quite dark. After playing New World, his concept of time seemed to be mixed up. When he returned home a little while ago, it was 8 a.m. However, in New World one day had passed and it was now evening. He had somewhat gotten used to it but still found it strange sometimes.

“But one or two days.....”

Since his condition wasn't good after sleeping, it would probably clear up after he played for a bit.

“Then, should I start putting things in order?”

Ark checked the pot in his cabin first. The process of maturation was still progressing without any problems. The only thing left was to wait. He was also level 151. His goal of reaching 150 was reached.

‘But there are still a lot of things to do here.’

After communicating with Yggdrasil, he had received the quest. At first, Ark hadn't thought that this quest was important. The compensation received was ambiguous. In order to complete the quest, he had to plant the seeds. Then who would he receive the compensation from? Yggdrasil was in the Underground World so it couldn't possibly give a reward while Popo was just a seed so he couldn't give compensation either. Perhaps he would only receive fame and experience. When he received the quest, he wanted to complete it somehow but the lack of obvious compensation meant he didn't try very hard.

But now things have changed. Lancel Village was having a severe food crisis! Although he wasn't sure, but Popo must be able to solve the problem. Even without a quest reward, it wasn't possible to delay it any longer in case Lancel Village's real estate price declined.

‘And.....I was very indifferent in the meantime.’

Ark looked at Popo uncomfortably. When Popo first began to travel, he often spoke to others from the bag. But by the time they had arrived at Lancel Village, his words had gradually decreased until he wasn't talking any more. A plant receives its nutrients from the land. While Popo was in his seed state, he couldn't eat anything. The current Popo had no energy because of a depleted battery.

Since there was no time limit on the quest, he had become too comfortable. If he kept on going like that, Popo would completely have his batteries depleted. After all, Popo was a child of Yggdrasil. If Popo withered up and died, his intimacy with the raccoons might even fall.’

In fact, Ark didn't have a high intimacy with the raccoons that moved to Lancel Village. They were the raccoons who had been transformed into monsters in the Underground World. The monsters that Ark defeated were their colleagues. Therefore, they had no reasons to like him. Even so, the raccoons displayed a friendly attitude to him when Ark arrived in Lancel Village.

'It was to the extent that they gave me a cabin as a present.....'

Ark was able to guess the reason. He was carrying the seeds of Yggdrasil, the guardian of the raccoons which probably gave him an intimacy bonus with them. Therefore, it was because of the seeds that he was favoured. But wouldn't they take their gifts back if he allowed Popo to die? If that happened, he couldn't guarantee what would happen to his relationship with the raccoon clan. So he couldn't put off the quest any longer.

'Yes, it's clear that I have to do this immediately.'

But once he starting thinking, he had no idea about where to start. Even though he had made up his mind, Ark couldn't just wander around aimlessly. When he was searching the Argus Mountains, he always had 'Sacred Soil' in the back of his mind. But even after exploring the Argus Mountains for 20 days, he still hadn't found a clue.

'There are a lot of areas I still haven't seen, but I can't just wander around blindly. Is there any way to obtain information about it?'

At that time, Hanson appeared in Ark's head. Hanson was a cartographer so he should know more about soil than Ark.

Hanson replied after thinking for a while.

"Sacred soil.....yes, I've heard of it before. It is a ground where the power has been concentrated for so long that the earth becomes very powerful. The Northern People used to call it the Sacred Soil whenever it appeared"

"Can it be found in the Argus Mountains?"

"I think so. Because mountain plateaus are one of the places it is most active. Among those places should be an area where an especially strong power is gathered.....maybe where the mountains overlap?"

"The area where the mountains overlap?"

"It is often collected in places like mountain valleys. A northern race used to consider the valley a sacred shelter of the gods and prayed there. Wouldn't there be a relationship between those two things?"

"So you're saying that the Sacred Soil might be found in the ground of valleys?"

"I'm only guessing. I've never seen a Sacred Soil directly. I don't know what it looks like. Even if I saw it then I probably wouldn't have recognized it. Even though it is the Sacred Soil, if the colour is the same then how would you recognize it from the dirt surrounding it?"

Ark's eyes became bigger at Hanson's words.

'Eh? That reminds me, how would I be able to tell that it is the Sacred Soil?'

Why had he never thought of that? He was just blindly trying to find the Sacred Soil. How would he even distinguish it from normal dirt? What if it was identical in appearance? Was there an alternative method?

"Then there is no way for me to find the Sacred Soil?"

"Well from what I heard, the Sacred Soil is imbued with so much power that plants would often grow around it. You should probably look for a place that is strangely overgrown. But since this is the south and the Argus Mountains have lush forests, it might be difficult to find it that way."

Hanson was locked in thought for a moment.

"I don't know if this is useful or not, but someone from the Northern forests might be able to help you."

“Northern forests?”

“Yes, they lived in harsh environments where not many forests grow, unlike the south. So the people there developed a ‘special skill’ to ensure that they can find anything in the forest, even very small objects. I also heard that they could find the shelter for gods.”

“There is a special technique to find something?”

Then a name suddenly appeared in Ark’s head.

“Madusein!”

Madusein was the owner of the magic ingredients shop who had ripped him off over the corrupted fairy wings. He remembered hearing him say the same words. Finding something that couldn’t be seen required special skills. It wasn’t a coincidence that an NPC said those words.

“Thank you.”

Ark immediately ran to the magic ingredients shop near the entrance of the village.

“How did I find the corrupted fairy wings?”

“Yes, what was the special ability that ajusshi said was needed?”

Madusein scratched his head and looked at Ark suspiciously. There was often a slow response to the first question asked when meeting an NPC. If they answered the question then it confirmed that the intimacy was high enough. In other words, intimacy was necessary to find the required information. Fortunately, he had bought corrupted fairy wings worth 300 gold of him so there was some degree of intimacy. Thanks to that he barely made it.

“I don’t know why I have to answer the question, but there is no reason to hide it. It’s a technique called Magic Detection. Only a few magicians in the Schudenberg Kingdom have mastered this vision technique.”

Madusein bragged as he replied. Ark asked in an urgent tone.

“Is it possible to learn that technique?”

“Why would I teach it to you?”

Madusein snorted.

“Why do you think I came to live on this mountain? There are various magic ingredients that can only be obtained from the Argus Mountains. There are an infinite number of them, but it isn’t easy to get such important ingredients. So why would I teach you such a technique and have another competitor? I have no thoughts of selling my technique.”

It was a natural reaction. It wasn’t easy to learn skills from NPCs. There must be a significant degree of intimacy, or a reason to teach it such as a quest or pay an equivalent price. In that respect, learning battle or production skills were relatively easy. A warrior’s skill could be learnt from a mercenary NPC. No, there was no need to give money in order to learn. For one thing, repetition of a behaviour would result in a new skill being learnt. If you can see and imitate the NPC, then a new skill would naturally form. The purpose of production was to make money, so NPCs would set up a school where people would pay to learn skills.

However, a magician’s or alchemist’s skill was different. Magic and alchemy was knowledge that had been passed secretly from ancient times! Unlike a warrior’s skill, it couldn’t be learnt by repeating the behaviour. The NPCs desire to monopolize the skill was also strong so they weren’t easily bribed. In the end, the only way was to find the skill themselves so it was much more difficult to learn a magician’s skill than a warrior’s. Madusein was a shop owner as well as a magician NPC. It wouldn’t be easy to get him to teach the skill. Ark also knew that much. But even Madusein was a resident of Lancel Village. Ark thought he would be able to persuade him by saying it would help resolve the food shortage crisis. When he tried to explain that, Madusein just turned his head and snorted.

“Why do I have to pay attention to things like that? I don’t want to hear it. Just get out.”

Madusein became annoyed and drove Ark out. His impression from the first time they met wasn't very good and Ark also became annoyed. In fact, Madusein didn't have a good reputation in Lancel Village. There was hardly any interactions with the residents, and charged the town quite a lot of money while hardly spending anything. Ark hadn't understood even when he bought the fairy wings and he refused to discount even 1 copper. It was a mistake to think that he would obediently teach the skill. However, Ark wasn't the type to give up once he had a goal.

'There are two ways to learn a skill from a NPC.'

One way was through quest rewards and high intimacy. It was the universal method in New World. But after looking at Madusein's character, that way seemed impossible. Then he had no choice but to use the other method. Now, how could he apply pressure to Madusein?

'I have to discover the thing that Madusein needs and then blackmail the skill out of him. The only thing I can remember is the unicorn horn, but I don't know when that would grow back..... does he have any other weakness? Did the magician have a reason for coming to this mountain village? That might be a hint.'

Ark ran around Lancel Village trying to find information about Madusein. But Madusein hadn't been in Lancel for very long. In addition, he didn't interact with the residents so none of them knew him well. In the end, Ark had wasted a few hours struggling.

"Madusein.....there is something I remember. He runs the business but he also has to collect magic ingredients from the Argus Mountains. Therefore, I've never seen him leave the store. But I have heard that he often roams the mountains at night looking for ingredients."

Galen added as if he suddenly remembered.

"He also purchased these strange tools from my store in the past."

"Tools?"

“Hum, it was a hammer or pickaxe as well as a wheelbarrow. Maybe they are tools necessary to dig up the magic ingredients?”

After Galen spoke, Ark became puzzled. Hammer or pickaxe and wheelbarrow.....they weren't normally tools used for picking ingredients. If he never leaves the store except for collecting ingredients, why would he buy such tools? Ark noticed something suspicious with his intuition. After he asked around Lancel Village again, new information came out.

‘New World is a game no matter how much it seems like reality!’

A system where you could only obtain another clue after finding the first one was the basics of RPGs! That rule was also applied to New World. In other words, the residents couldn't answer when he asked them for information about Madusein but once Galen pointed it out, he was bombarded with information about other suspicious events.

“The other day he ordered a large quantity of wood and stone. It wasn't a small amount so he would need a place to pile it up. The store's basement wouldn't be that big.”

It was the testimony of a raccoon.

“I often feel the earth shaking late at night. I asked other people in the morning but they didn't know anything.....is it because I've become weak these days?”

It was the testimony of a resident who lived near the magic ingredients store.

“Recently when I've gone scouting in the forest, piles of soil and gravel would appear overnight. It couldn't be monsters.....so who would have moved the dirt? Well, I don't really want to find out.”

It was the testimony of a Meow warrior guarding Lancel Village.

‘A tool set used for construction. And a large amount of wood and stone. During the night the earth shakes and unidentified piles of dirt appear.’

If he looked at it one by one then he wouldn't have been able to figure it out. But if he put all the information together then there was no doubt. And if he tried to guess the reason then he could only come to one conclusion.

'Madusein is the type to consider even 1 copper precious so what if.....?'

Ark considered and immediately went to the town hall. After confirming the registration information for the magic ingredients store, Ark was convinced that his idea was right.

'That Madusein.....I've caught you!'

"W-what are you talking about?"

Madusein stuttered with a confused look. It was the expected result.

"Why are you so surprised? The several wide warehouses revealed you. Since you have a lot of money, how about teaching me the technique for free?"

"The warehouse was wide? I don't know what on earth you're talking about. I cannot have a rival. Stop talking such nonsense."

Madusein said as he turned his back quickly. Then Ark asked with a strange look.

"Is it really okay?"

“So what? What do you mean?”

“I’ve examined a few of them. Since it is a pioneering village, instead of promising residents low tax they promised them interest free land. Therefore you have freedom to make an underground cellar underneath your shop. Isn’t that right? Didn’t ajusshi properly receive the land that this store is built on?”

“So?”

“You became greedy and wanted more.”

Ark kept on knocking the floor with his feet.

“I checked it at the town hall. The land that ajusshi received was a 10 metres radius. This store certainly meets those criteria. But what about underneath?”

“U-underneath?”

“Although you have been fairly careful.....Lancel is a small village. You bought tools from the general store and wood and stone from the raccoon family. So what would the owner of a magic ingredients store do with items like that?”

“That, that is.....”

“In addition, a vibration was felt in the earth around here at night. And mounds of dirt appeared in the forest overnight. Does ajusshi knows the answer?”

Ark lifted the corners of his mouth. That’s right. When he put the information together, he could conclude that Madusein was secretly expanding his underground warehouse. The tool kit and wood and stone materials was necessary for the work. And the vibration in the ground was because of the construction. A magician could reduce the noise using ‘silence’ magic, but it wasn’t possible to

completely get rid of the vibration. The mounds of dirt and gravel in the forest were because he had secretly moved it there.

In the game, renovating buildings illegally was also a crime! Well let's think about it. Why would Madusein sneak around and proceed with the construction? Of course, it was because Madusein was a penny pincher. Although migrants were given a certain amount of land for free, if they wanted to widen it then the NPC would have to pay more money. That money was precious to Madusein. Because of that he expanded his warehouse secretly. The reason he built the shop near the village entrance was because there were no other houses around.

"Although it is a little strange. Ajusshi didn't rest and just kept on collecting ingredients. The only magic ingredients store is in this village so you've also been selling the ingredients to other villages. If so, where would you keep all your extra ingredients? I don't think the small warehouse underground is large enough for that. What would happen if Galen ajusshi figured it out?"

"Are you threatening me now?"

"Threatening? I didn't say that....."

Ark slowly narrowed the distance.

"Let's negotiate."

"Negotiate?"

"Yes, isn't this world give and take? There is no reason for ajusshi expanding the warehouse to affect me. If you want then I'll shut my mouth. But shouldn't ajusshi also show some sincerity in return?"

".....What do you want?"

Madusein asked while shooting him a nasty look. But there was no reason for Ark to be afraid. By revealing his feelings, he had admitted defeat. Ark smiled and said.

“Don’t you already know what I want?”

“Don’t tell me! Are you asking me to teach you my vision technique?”

“If you don’t want to then don’t.”

Ark said before turning his body around. Madusein quickly opened his mouth.

“W-wait!”

‘It has ended.’

A smile formed around Ark’s mouth. In fact, he couldn’t have failed in the negotiations. Before Ark started the negotiations, he had already examined the village rules with Galen. If there was an unauthorized construction on the land then the village chief had all rights to take away the building. In other words, the magic ingredients that Madusein collected and stored in the underground warehouse that he widened without Galen’s permission belonged to the warehouse. Lancel Village was already in a crisis situation. Furthermore, the opponent was Madusein who didn’t have a good reputation. If Galen knew this then he would confiscate the ingredients with cheerful arms. He would also scold Madusein who tried to save money by waiting until everyone was sleeping at night in order to expand the warehouse!

‘It would be better to have him teach the skill then give me hundreds or thousands of gold. Because it won’t cost a lot of money immediately. And Madusein’s assets would belong to the village so I wouldn’t get a large profit from it. The chance to learn the skill is a hundred times better.’

If Madusein taught Ark the skill then they would both profit. That was why the negotiations couldn’t have failed.

‘Do not blame me. It was you that did this to yourself.’

“Now, have you decided?”

“.....If I teach you this technique..... ”

“I swear to keep my mouth shut for my whole life.”

Ark laughed while Madusein saw him as a devil. However, he had no choice. Finally, he held out a thin book.

“Damn, here it is. I wrote down everything about the vision magic. Have it and get out.”

Madusein couldn't tolerate the bitterness and turned his head. But has wasn't intimidated by the words anymore.

“Then see you next time.”

Ark said making the NPC even angrier before quietly exiting the store.

‘Huhuhu, you thought that you could just casually eat all my money? I’m the type of person who will make the NPC pay.’

The 300 gold that he wasted buying the corrupted fairy wings! Madusein wouldn't even take 1 copper off the price. Ark hadn't forgotten the grudge from that time.

“Now, let's learn the skill.”

After he opened the book and information window popped up.

A new skill ‘Madusein's Vision (Rare) has been learnt.

Magic Detection (Special, Beginner, Active: Using this mysterious magic, it is possible to sense changes in the surrounding magic for 30 minutes. There are various magic ingredients with special effects that can't be seen by ordinary people. Magic Detection can help you grasp those ingredients. However, Magic Detection is limited to plants and objects. You won't be able to find memories of things that have been buried a long time ago. It is impossible to overlap with another vision related skill (Mana cost: 50)