

# ARK THE LEGEND

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ROK GAME FANTASY STORY

## 아크더레전드

## **My name is Alan!**

Tak tak tak, tak tak tak.

Footsteps moved quickly in the darkness. The soldiers quickly moved between the walls while holding rifles. The soldiers movements showed their training as they had no unnecessary movements. They moved 100 metres and gathered behind a thick bulkhead.

“B team, we’ve arrived in the strategy area.”

*–Any enemy movement?*

A mixed up voice was heard from the Nymphe. A blond soldier equipped with an infrared scope looked over the bulkhead and replied.

“So far I don’t see any strange movements.”

*–Okay. Commence the work immediately. Finish the operation within 10 minutes and join us.*

“Understood.”

The blond soldier answered and winked. The soldier who received the wink nodded and 3~4 soldiers put down a bag. A monitor the size of the palm of a hand spouted 4 spikes and fixed firmly to the ground while a bag full of mechanical parts were opened.

“We have 10 minutes.”

“Yes, just give me a moment.”

The blond soldier leaned back against the bulkhead and searched his pockets. He pulled out a crumpled cigarette before suddenly turning his head like he remembered something.

“Hey, newbie. Do you want one?”

“No, it’s okay.”

“You should relax a little bit. Your neck and back will become too stiff if you don’t relax. Didn’t I tell you? This is also a relaxing technique. It is good to be careful but you can’t show all your skills if you’re too tense. So rest when you can.”

“Yes.”

The person wearing a full helmet nodded. However the man still didn’t take his eyes off the other side of the bulkhead.

‘I’ve finally arrived.’

The environment was pitch black. Even without the infrared scope, the enemies swarming hundreds of metres from where the soldiers were gathered could clearly be seen. The shadows swarmed like a group of ants that they would soon fight.

‘How on earth.....’

A complicated sigh flowed from the man’s mouth. No matter how thorough his plans, unpredictable actions could happen that would cause adverse situation. At least that was his experience. But this time he didn’t know if he was lucky or unlucky. There was only one thing he was certain of! But whether it was lucky or unlucky, he had no choice anymore.

‘Yes, this is my mission now. So I need to concentrate on survival. I have no choice but to wait for a good opportunity. I have to breakthrough somehow to do that!’

The man made a firm resolution. Suddenly a blue light flashed from the dark side.

‘Eh? A light? Heek! D-don’t tell me.....?’

It had only been 1 second since the man noticed the light. Then a streamlined object trailing smoke flew towards him! The blond man who was smoking noticed the smoke and cried out.

“It is dangerous! Rocket!”

Kwa kwa kwa kwang!

There was an eardrum shaking roar. Flames swept past the top of the bulkhead and caused it to melt. Urgency appeared on the head of the blond soldier’s face that had been deeply tanned.

“Dammit, we were found?”

*–B team! What is going on? Report on the situation!*

“Those guys have detected us! We need support!”

*–Damn, it can’t be helped. We’ll move there soon so endure for a little while.*

“Understood!”

The blond soldier turned his body to the opposite side while answering vigorously. Black shadows were quickly climbing over the held melted bulkhead.

“Heok! T-this fast.....?”

“They’ve also appeared here! Several of them seem to have hidden around here!”

“Ugh, shoot! We must endure until the main forces get here!”

Tu tu tu tu! Tu tu tu tu! Tu tu tu tu!

The blond soldier yelled with distress and fired over the bulkhead. But the enemies’ movements were faster. They avoided the bullets and ran along the bulkhead towards the blond soldier. Sharp fangs with a horrible smell were about to be driven in the blond soldier’s neck!

Snap!

There was a ring and the enemy flew sideways as it was hit. The soldier with the full helmet approached and asked.

“Are you alright?”

“N-newbie! Heok, it is dangerous!”

The blond soldier’s face turn pale white and he burst out screaming. Three shadows had appeared behind the rookie soldier. The man realized his situation thanks to the blond soldier’s reaction and turned. However, their movement was many times faster. The rookie couldn’t respond before they covered him. And the man was rolled to the other side.

“Dammit! Newbie! Answer me! Newbie! Ah.....”

The blond soldier cried out with a desperate tone.

Cheolkeok, cheolkeok, cheolkeok! Pepepeng!

There was a ringing sound and the head of a shadow on the man exploded. Half of the head flew away and the other two shadows bounced back from the shockwave. The newcomer in the centre slowly stood up. But he looked completely different from before. He was surrounded by an insect like armour. The black armour was the battle suit designed for space pioneering. And the man wearing the battle suit.....

The blond soldier laughed as he saw it.

“Alan.....this bastard, you surprised me!”

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“Eh? What, what the?”

Ark was confused.

“What is going on?”

He couldn’t understand the sight unfolding before his eyes. It was evident that something was going on. And there was no doubt that Ark’s actions would have a profound impact. The problem was he wasn’t sure if it was

good or not. But there was one thing he was sure about. Something.....there was something strange about the situation.

“No, it can’t be. It isn’t necessary to think of this as something bad. Yes, it’s been good so far. The results seem to be good. There is evidence that I’ve received quite a bit of good luck. Now let’s calm down and think. I might be able to find some clues from the beginning to understand the situation.”

Ark pushed down his confusion and recalled some memories. It was approximately 3 hours ago.

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“Found it! I found it! I finally found it!”

Ark was lost in excitement. It was reasonable. He had travelled 100 km from Nabe towards the Nabe lake and searched for a while for Charem.

“I knew there was something when I heard about the prohibited area!”

He had sensed there was a relation after hearing Bakum’s words. But he never imagined the process he would go through to find Charem. He had encountered a group of androids and thought he was going to die! Then he was swept away by a vortex! Once caught in the current of water, he was drawn towards a large propeller and almost turned into mincemeat! It took more than 10 days to reach this point! The result was excellent! Ark wasn’t the type to dwell on the past.

“If my search wasn’t so precise then I wouldn’t have found the Charenjok. My 10 day search wasn’t useless. Yes, that’s right. It is natural.”

He rationalized everything.

“Anyway, I understand almost all the surrounding circumstances.”

Ark looked at his Nymphe’s screen. In fact, Ark couldn’t understand the situation that occurred just now. It was natural. He was suddenly attacked by

androids at the bottom of the lake, sucked into a black hole and driven towards a huge propeller. It was difficult to understand something that happened so suddenly. But all his doubts were resolved the moment he saw Charem on his Nympe screen. He slid the Wire Camera through a gap in the pipe and saw a panoramic view of the city. Charem was a city floating in the clouds and surrounded by a transparent blue sphere! Charem was an aerial city in the clouds.

“Yes, I was moved through a huge water tank. I thought it felt familiar and now I know. The water tank is a water facility. The black hole I was sucked into is a pipe that moves water from the northern lake to facilities in the city. The lobster androids that attacked me are the guards protecting the source of water.”

It was the reason the octopuses disappeared. The android lobsters were placed to protect the water source. The octopuses were probably caught the moment they entered. The octopuses bodies were then sucked into the filter tank, purified and turned into minerals for the drinking water. Anyway.....that was the dreadful secret of the prohibited area.

“What about the quest received from Bakum?”

The ending was slightly uncomfortable but weren't the octopuses already dead? However, he couldn't just say 'this is the last of the missing octopuses' and hand over some mineral water. Anyway, Bakum asked him to find what happened to the little octopuses and gave him compensation in advance so he should neatly clean up the quest.

“Above all.....”

Ark opened the quest information window.

<Charem's Infiltration>

-The goal of the quest have been changed.

You've received a secret mission from Marquis Martin and managed to sneak into Charem after a long investigation. But you can't be relieved just yet. It isn't an exaggeration to say that this is just the start of your mission and the real danger will begin now.

Your job is to transmit Charem's GPS information to the galactic federation. But Charem is a city that constantly moves so the correct GPS information can't be acquired. So the GPS information needs to be continually transmitted from inside Charem. Like you've already heard, the many layers of the shield is hiding Charem from the federation's monitoring. The only way to transmit the GPS information outside is to connect to Charem's communication antenna in their central control tower.

Difficulty: A

+ Sub Quest: <Intelligence Agent Kara> +

<Intelligence Agent Kara> is a separate mission received from Marquis Martin. Before this situation had occurred, Marquis Martin had sent an intelligence agent to Charem. If you find Kara who is already in Charem then you will be able to receive a lot of help to complete the mission. If you can find him.

The quest was automatically updated once he confirmed it was Charem with the Wire Camera.

“The information window states that the real danger is beginning now. I have to locate Charem's central control power. Entering a place like that and connecting to the tower won't be easy. All the residents and guards here are enemies.”

This situation might be even more difficult! He couldn't dwell on the fate of

the octopuses.

“Okay, now the first thing I have to do is.....”

Ark considered for a while before smiling.

“Of course it is shopping.”

He had planned that since receiving the quest. Once again, Charem wasn't an ordinary city. Charem was a huge smuggling market! And the most important feature was that there was no tax. In other words, all the goods traded in Charem were duty free goods! There was a slight handling fee but it was cheaper than formally importing it. Smuggled goods that were more expensive than regular goods didn't exist. Furthermore, the goods were prohibited items. It traded in smuggled goods from the federation, Aschulat and even the Rama. It was possible to save money and gain rare items on Charem.

Ark couldn't overlook the chance to go shopping for such items.

“If Charem is helping the Rama then Marquis Martin will rally the federal army to arrest them. If I complete the quest then Charem will be out of business. So I should use this chance to shop before I begin the quest. And I have abundant money.”

Ark sent a warm look towards his heavy bag. He had tirelessly picked up items on Beltana and earned 17,400 gold! Ark monopolized all the money under the name of a business founding capital. Ark was prepared to pour all that money in if necessary. There was no reason to save money when buying an item that might give him more profit. This was the real reason why Ark postponed the Murat ruins expedition and accepted this quest.

“Huhuhu, this is clearly the revelation of heaven.”

He could smell money.

“I should go outside for the moment.”

Ark wiped up his saliva and crawled along the pipe. Ark had spent a fortnight living in the pipes on R-14. Ark was also blazing with the will to go shopping. Small and complicated pipes weren't a problem for him. So he crawled through the pipe for 2 hours.

“An exit! Here is Charem!”

Finally he was able to go outside. And.....

“What, what the? This?”

He witnessed an incomprehensible sight. Ark had seen Charem from inside the pipe. There were a huge variety of aliens and the atmosphere was like a huge shopping mall. But the place Ark arrived at had a completely different atmosphere. Not that many people were visible. He had deliberately chosen a deserted place and waited for night time where there would be fewer people. Yet he couldn't find even a single trace of a person once he went outside. That wasn't the only problem.

“It is like a war has occurred.....”

He didn't realize it at first because it was dark but the buildings weren't normal. Some were crumbling down while other buildings had huge holes in the exterior walls. That wasn't all. Some rubble were gathered and used to seal off certain paths.

Why? What was the reason?

‘No, this atmosphere is like they are preparing for a wall. But why? Who.....? Charem has certainly antagonized the federation. But the federation hasn't found Charem yet. And it is also difficult for the federation to suddenly attack other alien species. If a foreign enemy attacks then the shield around the city can protect them.

The only thing he could think of was an inner enemy!

‘Is it something like a riot or coup d'état?’

But Charem's atmosphere hadn't felt like this when looking at the city from the pipe. And a riot of coup d'état didn't explain why there were no indications of people around.

'It is clear that something has happened.' I saw people from inside the pipe so the situation is only happening in certain areas. Then should I return to the pipe and look for a normal section of the city?'

Ark thought for a while before shaking his head.

'No, it is too risky. If it is a huge event then the whole city might be changed. Whether it is a riot or external attack, the city's security was higher than normal. If I step into a place filled with people then I might cause a ruckus. Yes, I should learn what happened here first.'

A person naturally appeared in his head when thinking about it. The intelligence agent Marquis Martin sent, Kara. He sneaked in Charem before it was closed off so he would know what happened. He had wanted to put off contacting Kara until he finished shopping but now he had no choice.

-You have sent a message to recognition code T-3012.

He sent a message to Kara's recognition code that he received from Marquis Martin

Cheolpeok! Jiik..... Cheolpeok! Jiik.....

He suddenly heard the sound of something wet against the ground.

'There is someone!'

He suddenly heard a sound from a place where there were no signs of people. Ark sharpened his nerves and looked around. Then he heard the same sound again. The sound was coming from the opposite corner!

"Stealth."

Ark whispered and his body became transparent. The light refracted around his body was one of the Survivor coating skills, Stealth! Ark killed the sound of his footsteps while in Stealth mode and approached the source of the noise. The moment he protruded his head around the corner!

‘Huk! W-what the hell?’

A situation he couldn’t imagine was occurring in the alley. The first thing he saw was a corpse. There were three or four bodies on the ground with their flesh torn out. And a strange monster with long skinny arms and legs like a mummified spider were biting away at the bodies. But Ark wasn’t surprised at the corpses or the monster. Galaxian was a game. It was a SF game. Therefore it would be okay even if a monster resembling Taekwon V showed up. Slaughtering hundreds of thousands of people with a nuclear bomb was also okay. The unidentified monster wasn’t an interest to him. But the circumstances were different because this was the middle of a city.

‘Why is there a monster in town? Does the situation in the city have something to do with these monsters? No, why would a monster in the first place.....’

Ark couldn’t get a grasp of the situation. However, his worries didn’t continue for long.

Cheolpeok.

‘Eh? What is this? Blood?’

Ark had stepped on some weird blood gathered on the ground. The monster that was eating the corpse suddenly raised its head. Stealth was a skill that only showed its worth when the opponent didn’t know about Ark’s existence. If the opponent noticed Ark then the effect would disappear. The monster heard the noise he made and the transparent effect faded when it lifted its head.

“Dammit! Impact sword!”

Ark cursed and pulled out his sword.

Tang-! Tang-! Tang-!

The sound of gunshots shook the city at the same time. But the monster was already somewhere else. Ark had pulled the trigger of his sword but the monster had already attached itself to the wall and moved towards Ark. The spider attached to the wall moved with tremendous speed. The fangs gleaming with blood soon got close to him. It was the fangs that had been biting the corpses just now!

Snap!

Ark flinched as it headed towards his shoulder. Ark groaned and rolled across the ground. He raised his body and pulled the trigger again. No, he was about to pull it. However the monster was gone.

“What, what the? Where is that bastard?”

Kieeeeeeeek!

Ark burst out with confusion and the monster on the opposite wall shrieked and rushed towards him. His chest was torn as blood splattered. The subsequent attack had claws scratching his side. It was a speed difficult to spot with his eyes! It also had high damage so his health decreased by 30% after a few attacks. However.....

“I got it!”

Ark exclaimed while laughing. At the same time, his arms grabbed the monster’s waist firmly. He lifted the waist and did a back drop! He threw it firmly to the ground.

“I’m sorry but my specialty is close combat fighting.”

Ark laughed as he looked at the monster splattered on the ground. That’s right. Ark’s combat style combined taekwondo and martial arts. But that wasn’t all. Gwon Hwa-rang introduced him to the famous police officer Lee

Myung-ryong and he beat Ark down to make him stronger. Ark was dedicated himself to training to prove his Master's faith. One part of being Lee Myung-ryong's disciple was dauntlessness. He needed to become stronger if he wanted to survive with such a master. Therefore Ark definitely became stronger. By training in the police academy's gym, he became well-rounded in boxing, judo and wrestling. It was part of the reason for the birth of New World's strongest user. Anyway!

Ark's nose bled until he got anaemia learning the techniques and they were now ingrained in his body. Ark used the gun but he couldn't compete in a speed battle with it. He had reflexively become used to shooting a gun first. But the opponent was too fast to be pushed into close combat fighting.

'A quick monster like that won't be hit by my marksmanship. But that's only if I can't strike a direct blow. It won't be necessary to use a gun. It is so fast that I can't catch up but.....'

"Come you zombie like guy, bring it on!"

Ark purposely provoked the monster. And it ran up trying to bite his shoulder.

"Yes, no matter how quick you are you still have to approach me when attacking!"

Ark grabbed the body and slammed it against the ground. But that wasn't the end. He kept on kicking it when it was forced to the ground. Kick! Kick! The monster struggled to get up and punch! Punch! Punch! It tried to use its claws and stab! Stab! Stab! The monster wasn't a match for Ark once he used martial arts. He was capable of having a martial arts career. And 100 damage, 200, 300.....the monster was battered after a 3 minute battle.

"Phew, that was more difficult than I thought."

Ark also wasn't in a normal state. He had been relentless bit and scratched and only had 30% health left. The opponent wasn't easy to deal with.

“Now that I have time to speak.....what on earth is this guy?”

Ark breathed harshly as he looked down at the monster on the ground. Ark’s Clairvoyance skill gave him the ability to learn information about the monster. Therefore Ark immediately used the Clairvoyance but couldn’t learn any information.

-???? –

Type: ??? Danger: ???

Combat Power: ???

You are unable to identify the object.

It had question marks like the android lobster he encountered. But the one collapsed on the ground wasn’t an android. It bled something like oil but it was unmistakably a monster. That meant it was a monster not yet identified. It was incomprehensible to Ark.

“Why is an unidentified monster in a city and not the Outlands? How did a monster with no known information about it appear in a city floating thousands of metres in the air? And why is this city like this?”

He had several questions. And he still hadn’t received a reply from Kara.

“Damn, what is he doing? It can’t be helped. I don’t know anything about these monsters and it is too risky to move around. I’ll go back to the pipe for the moment and wait for Kara to contact me. I should search that guy first.”

Ark decided on the course he would take and approached the monster. Suddenly the dead monster started shaking?

“Heok! What, what the?”

Ark had no idea what was happening with the corpse and retreated. The

stomach of the monster bloated like a balloon and split open. Then a few spider like insects crawled out? It was so creepy that Ark experienced goose bumps at the scene. But the more shocking scene occurred afterwards. Ark hesitated and withdrew while the spiders attached themselves to the corpses. The bones and limbs of the dead body doubled in length. It became thin and looked like a mummified spider. Surprisingly it turned into the monster that he had just killed. And.....it started producing two bodies.

“This, unbelievable.....how is this.....?”

Ark stuttered with a pale face. It was a shocking scene! But that wasn't the problem right now. Ark only had 30% health left after fighting the monster right now. But now 3 more had appeared.

‘A group! I can't win like this!’

The monster's fast speed also meant that it wouldn't be easy to escape.

‘Dammit, I should've escaped as soon as I defeated one.....the odds aren't in my favour even if I wear the battle suit. There is no other way. I have to run away. If I wear the battle shield and use Mind Shield then I might be able to hold on long enough to escape. I have to sneak away to the manhole.’

Ark was about to implement his plan to withdraw.

Pa pa pa pa! Pa pa pa pa!

The monsters ran along the two side walls at a huge rate. Some also blocked the entrance of the alley.

‘Oh my god! My path has been blocked! At this rate.....’

Ark looked desperately at the monsters.

“Get down!”

A mysterious yell suddenly resounded through the alley. He reflexively turned around and saw a flash crossing the darkness. The identity was a rocket fired from a RPG. But where did it come from? Who? He had no room

to consider these things. Ark had already experienced the power of the RPG on the battlefield. If he was directly hit then he would lost 50% health even when wearing the battle suit! If he was involved in the RPG explosion in this narrow alley then Ark who only had 30% health left would turn to ashes.

“Dammit! What on earth?”

Ark cursed as he ran inside the alley.

Kwa kwa kwa kwa kwa kwa!

The ensuing explosion shook the area. The shock wave caused Ark to fly into a wall! His hair was burnt and he lost 10% health. Ark grabbed his head and cried out.

“Y-you.....”

Ark swallowed a moan and turned his head. Then he heard the same voice that yelled out before.

“A team, B team, now’s the time. Don’t let them rest and continue assaulting them!”

Tu tu tu tu! Tu tu tu tu! Tu tu tu tu!

After the RPG attack there was a shower of bullets. The monsters were overwhelmed by the firepower and collapsed to the ground.

“The opponents are the Sufferers. C team, finish it!”

Hwaaaaaack!

Flames engulfed the monsters that had fallen. The monsters wrapped in flames ran around screaming but their movements soon stopped and they turned in to ashes. After a while.....A group of people approached through the smoke. They wore glossy armour while holding assault rifles and grenades. And some were equipped with RPGs or flamethrowers. While Ark stared at them with stupid eyes, the soldiers checked the perimeter before nodding and shouting.

“Clear! I’ve confirmed that they are all extinct!”

“Hey, are you alive?”

Then one of the guys walked up to Ark. He was a middle aged man holding a RPG.

“Y-you are.....?”

“We are Charem’s special riot team Phoenix. I am the captain Kalbern.”

The middle aged Kalbern looked at Ark and laughed.

“I came after hearing some gun shots but you’re lucky. Meeting us like this. If we were a little bit later then you would already be dead. This is a contaminated area but it hasn’t been infested with Sufferers yet.”

“Contaminated area? Sufferer? What do you mean?”

“What? You have no idea what is happening here?”

Ark thought about Kalbern’s question. He forgot for a while but Ark had sneaked into Charem as the galactic federation’s spy. The monsters eating the corpses in the alley were dangerous but Ark also had to be cautious of Charem’s guards. If Ark was detected as a spy then it was likely that tremendous firepower would be turned on him.

“No, that.....”

Ark thought fiercely as he looked for an explanation.

“You must’ve found some shelter and hid in there the whole time so you don’t understand the whole situation.”

Kalbern seemed like an easy going character who didn’t pay attention to trivial matters. Ark quickly continued the conversation.

“Yes, that’s right. In fact I am a big hermit. I stayed at home for a long time and when I finally emerged it was like this. So I don’t know what happened. I’ve been hiding but I was surrounded by them before I knew it. Ah, I haven’t

greeted you. Thank you very much.”

“You went through a lot.....”

Kalbern laughed at his expression. Ark was currying favour to try and please the NPC. Anyway, Ark managed to avoid the Phoenix’s suspicions. And he waited for the proper timing before cutting to the chase.

“By the way, did you call that thing a Sufferer?”

“Yes, that is the name of the people who had the monsters attached to them and transformed.”

“People? Are you saying all those monsters were people? Why are those people.....?”

“We don’t know the exact reason.”

Kalbern scratched his head and sighed.

“In fact, we also don’t know that much. These monsters suddenly emerged from the central control tower around a month ago. The researchers who took shelter in the safety zone said that it was a type of disease. The patients were called Sufferers. Anyway, they are really annoying guys. The cause of the first onset is unknown but once the Sufferer turns, they become incredibly stronger with a body like a spider and they can infect the dead bodies around them. Thanks to that, the contamination has spread to 2/3rd of Charem. Fortunately we’ve isolated the contaminated area but we can’t stop the spread until we know the cause.....”

Kalbern murmured.

Then Ark’s Nymph vibrated and a message appeared.

-New monster data has been registered to your Nymph.

-Sufferer-

Category: Mutated Life Forms Danger: A

Combat Power: B~C

The Sufferer is a mutated life form of unknown origin in Charem. It isn't possible to grasp all the information about the Sufferer. The pathogens of the Sufferer can infect dead people and create a secondary infection of Sufferers. These life forms can increase exponentially and are classified as a 1st class risk in the galaxy.

\* You can gain additional information if you face the same type of monster many times.

The information on the Sufferer was updated on his Nymphe. Sometimes information about the monster would be registered after the NPC gives an explanation.

‘The Sufferer can infect the body? Isn't this like a zombie?’

But the corpses was the only thing that was similar. Ark was also fought zombies in New World. The features of those zombies were generally slow. But the Sufferer's speed was faster than Ark. He managed to use mixed martial arts to defeat it but it was difficult. Then wasn't it an enhanced zombie? Something floated in Ark's head as he thought this.

‘Wait? The Sufferers appeared a month ago? Wasn't one month ago when Charem broke off contact with the federation? Then the Sufferers are the reason why Charem broke off the exchange with the federation? Kalbern said that Charem's central control tower was part of the contaminated area. Was Charem's shield already triggered when the Sufferers appeared? If the Sufferers multiplied and prevents access to the central control power.....’

If all the shields were exercised then Charem was perfectly isolated from the outside. The federation didn't understand the reason and believed that

Charem was now a hostile force. Kalbern continued speaking while Ark was thinking.

“The biggest problem is that the shield was triggered but the central control power is overrun with Sufferers. In this situation we can’t send requests for help to the federation or the Aschulat. And there is no guarantee the safety zones won’t be infected.”

‘Oh my god! Then.....’

Ark became startled. Ark managed to enter the city thanks to Charem’s water system. But the water supply facility was designed to be a one way gate. It was an entrance but it wouldn’t work as an exit. In other words, Ark was also stuck in Charem. Of course there were still ways for him to escape. Ark’s last resurrection spot was Nabe so he would revive there if he died. But he would lose all the experience, skills and skill proficiencies that he gained over the last 10 days. Ark had no intention of doing something like that.

“Is there nothing we can do?”

“That’s why we’re here.”

“Huh?”

“Like I said, there is no guarantee that the safety zones will remain safe from the infection. And it is impossible to deal with all the Sufferers with our remaining soldiers. Then isn’t there only one way left? We have to retake the central control tower, turn off the shield and send a request for help.”

“Then.....?”

“We are the squad undertaking this mission. That’s why we’re out here.”

Kalbern scratched his head and replied. Ark thought for a moment and raised his head while saying.

“Captain Kalbern-nim, I have a request!”

“I can guess what the favour is but.....I’m sorry. We can’t protect you

anymore. One day has passed since we came here. Charem has been closed off for a month so the food supply in the safety zone is running out. It may sound cruel but retaking the tower's management system is more important than saving you. We have to accomplish the mission no matter what. Then all the problems will be settled. Why don't you return to your hideout and wait there? We will give you some supplies if you need it."

"That's not what I want to ask."

"That's not your favour? Then what is it?"

"I want to go with Captain Kalbern-nim's unit!"

"W-what? You want to accompany us? Are you in your right mind?"

"Of course."

No, but...."

"Please. I've heard about the reputation of the Phoenix unit and have long admired you. It increased even more after Captain Kalbern-nim and the Phoenix unit rescued me! It deeply impressed me. I can understand Captain Kalbern-nim's worries. You don't have to worry about my safety. My deep admiration for Captain Kalbern-nim will make me feel worse if you reject me."

"Ah, no, that is...."

"Captain-nim!"

Ark exclaimed and grabbed Kalbern's hand.

"I have always waited for this day! I can't possible remain in the contaminated area now that I know this. I deeply respect the Phoenix squad and your mission so I am willing to risk my life. I won't be a burden! Please give me a chance! This is my opportunity to be colleagues with the great Captain Kalbern-nim and the Phoenix squad!"

Ark looked at Kalbern with burning eyes. Of course this was 100% a lie. He

had only heard about the Phoenix unit now. He was thankful that they saved him but it wasn't to the extent that he spoke about. But there was a reason he talked like that.

'It is better to move with these guys!'

Ark came to this conclusion after hearing Kalbern's words.

'Looking at this situation, Charem didn't intentionally cut off contact with the federation. The central control tower was taken by the Sufferers and they can't control the shields anymore. But I don't care about Charem's circumstances. My mission is to connect to the central tower's antenna and transmit the GPS information to Marquis Martin. That didn't change even if he discovered the reason for the disconnection. But.....'

The Phoenix's mission was to reclaim Charem's management system. There would be a problem if the Phoenix succeeded or failed in the mission. If they failed then Ark would be trapped on Charem. However, it was difficult even if they succeeded. If the Phoenix squad regained control of the system then they would release the shield and send a help request to the federation and Aschulat. Ark would also be able to leave Charem. If he looked at it like that then it seemed like a happy ending. No, it was obviously a happy ending for Charem's NPCs but.....

'For me it is the worst ending!'

Then the reason for Ark to send Charem's GPS information would disappear. He wouldn't be able to receive compensation for the quest anymore. No, Marquis Martin was a ruthless opponent and might make him pay for the Hyde Helmet and STK-VII. In other words, all his efforts over the last few days and overcoming the many crisis would be for nothing.

'If I don't want to fail the quest then I need to connect to the antenna before the Phoenix squad to send the GPS information. If the GPS information is sent first then it doesn't matter if the Phoenix complete their mission.'

Marquis Martin would have to allow it. But it would be difficult to single-handedly capture the control tower overrun with Sufferers.

He could infer that from his 1-on-1 battle with a Sufferer just now. No, he wouldn't have trouble dealing with two of them. But it would be difficult to win if he faced three. Besides, they could infect dead bodies to produce new Sufferers! The control tower was infested with these monsters.

'There is a reason it is an A ranked quest. I thought that difficult was due to the sneaking in but it was actually for breaking into the control tower. That is the cause of the A ranking.'

This was the reason he wanted to accompany the Phoenix squad. Users couldn't determine the level of NPCs. However, it was possible to guess their level by looking at the NPC's equipment. All items had a level restriction attached to them. And the Phoenix squad were wearing weapons that Ark remembered having a level 80~90 restriction. The general members were higher levelled than Ark. And the squad had 30 people! They also fully understood the structure of the control tower.

'If these troops fail then it will be impossible on my own. I will also be in trouble if they succeed. So the only way left is to accompany them. Once they regain the management system, I have to quickly.....'

Everything would be okay if he sent the GPS information first! Charem would be saved and Ark would receive his reward.

"Captain-nim, this is my only wish! Please let me join the Phoenix squad!"

Ark started at Kalbern with eyes blazing with desire. Naturally that desire was towards the quest reward.

"Hah.....this is....."

Kalbern scratched his head.

"Captain-nim, just accept it."

A squad member who was watching laughed and cut in. Ark turned towards the voice and flinched. The member who interrupted had dark skin and pointy ears like a Dark Elf. Ark had seen this alien species before. The Rama that he encountered on Beltana!

‘There are also Rama in Charem.....’

It felt strange seeing a Rama who was normally his enemy as a NPC.

“Our mission is dangerous but isn’t it also dangerous to leave him here? He managed to defeat 1 Sufferer before we got here so his combat power should be useful. Isn’t Charem’s motto ‘all people are equal when it comes to profit?’ Is there a reason for refusing? Doesn’t he admire us?”

“Uhh.....”

Kalbern worried for a while but eventually nodded.

“It can’t be helped. Then Clark, you take care of him.”

“Yes.”

The Rama called Clark looked at Ark and said.

“Did you hear? I’ll be in charge of you from now on. I hope you will do well.”

“Thank you for your help.”

“Don’t thank me just yet. If you’re afraid then don’t come whining to me. Ah, and take this. It is a counter. You will receive a counter every time you defeat a Sufferer and the mileage will accumulate. We might be Charem’s special forces but we are also mercenaries. We won’t risk our lives for anything that doesn’t give money. If you become a member of Phoenix then you will also work for a reward. Why, are you disappointed? Do you find it disgusting that the Phoenix are trying to earn a bit of money from this situation?”

Was there such a thing?

He also collected rewards no matter the circumstances so he understood.

“No. Isn’t give and take a normal part of the world?”

“You are surprisingly flexible. I like it.”

At the same time, the Nymphe vibrated and the information window appeared.

<Operation to retake the management system>

You have met the Phoenix special forces in a contaminated area of Charem. A rescue operation is in progress to capture the management system at the central control tower.

You’ve asked to accompany the squad as a favour and Captain Kalbern allowed it. You will be compensated depending on the number of Sufferers you kill during the operation. But if you fail or die then you won’t be able to receive the compensation.

Difficulty: –

‘Oh, a quest?’

He could settle the <Charem’s Infiltration> quest as well! Ark once again burnt with motivation after looking at the information window.

“Then the members will soon be introduced to you. Anyway, you said Captain Kalbern say my name right? The following is.....ah, I haven’t asked for your name yet.

“Ah, yes. My name is A.....”

Ark was about to answer without thinking when he flinched and shut his mouth. The quest information window distracted him but Ark was a spy. Of course, Charem’s real situation meant he might not have to worry about being discovered. However, Ark’s purpose was to accompany the Phoenix squad and then send the GPS information to Marquis Martin first.

‘A problem might occur later so I should hide my real name.’

The Hyde Helmet had a full glass coating on the front so people couldn't see his face. The glass like monitor gave him a fake face and fake features. In other words, Kalbern and Clark were seeing someone other than Ark right now. But he hadn't registered a name yet.

‘Damn, I wanted to write a cool name like Dark Wolf. However I already said part of the name without thinking. If I say a different name then it might cause confusion. Therefore I need to find a name that starts with A.’

That name was.....

“Alan. Yes, my name is Alan.”

-The name ‘Alan’ has been registered in the Hyde Helmet's memory.

The message flashed after he spoke. Alan, this was the second name used by Ark in Galaxian.

**GO! GO! GO!**

“Alan.....this bastard, you surprised me!”

The blond soldier Clark's voice was heard. But Ark couldn't afford to turn around. 3 Sufferers had been hiding in the area and suddenly attacked Ark! Although 1 of them had the head split in half, the other 2 Sufferers were just shocked. After a moment, they got up with an angry sound and shot towards him. Among them was the Sufferer with the shattered head. The Sufferer was a type of enhanced zombie and wouldn't die even with the head blown away. That was one of its more dangerous characteristics. A few tentacles strands also emerged from the Sufferer's neck. The tentacles had weak attack but they were poisonous. That wasn't the only strange thing about the Sufferers.

“I've fought them many times but I can't think lightly of the Sufferers. The Sufferers' infection deepens so the old ones will be stronger. A lot of the stronger guys are still walking around. And we are trying to attack the control tower where the outbreak first occurred. In other words, the Sufferers there will be most stronger than the ones in the other contaminated areas. That is why Captain Kalbern hesitated to bring you with us.”

That was Clark's explanation. The level of the Sufferers increased the closer they got to the central control tower.

‘But they're not the only ones who became stronger!’

It had been 2 days since joining up with the Phoenix squad and he had fought at least 100 Sufferers while running across Charem. Ark also became stronger as they got closer to the control tower.

Kieeeeeeeek!

Then the bloody fangs of a Sufferer appeared in front of him. At first he couldn't handle such fast movements but experience was a good teacher. It was possible to grasp the timing after experiencing it a few times.

‘There are 3 opponents! I have to use the minimum of movements to avoid and then counter attack!’

Ark quickly stepped back and to the side. He raised his body and used its flexibility to ram into the Sufferer’s side. While the Sufferer was stumbling, he placed the muzzle on its thigh and pulled the trigger.

“Set Bullets Shooting!”

The most intimidating part of a Sufferer was its ability to accelerate. It was infected with an unidentified fungus and was capable to increasing its movement speed by several times. Blindly attacking wasn’t an effective method of dealing with that speed. Therefore Ark used a special bullet that the Phoenix squad used before. The bullet had a 3% chance of freezing the region that was hit!

Cheolkeok, cheolkeok, cheolkeok! Pepepeng!

There was a flash and the Sufferer’s leg turned blue.

-The freeze effect has been applied thanks to the Freezing Bullet hitting skin.

<The nerve tissue is frozen and the movement of that area will decrease by 30% for 1 minute>

‘It was activated!’

The Sufferer with the frozen leg wasn’t Ark’s opponent anymore. Ark wielded his sword like a storm and struck the frozen Sufferer. However, the Sufferer wasn’t alone. While Ark was beating up the handicapped one, the remaining two rushed towards him on both sides. But Ark also wasn’t alone.

“Shoot! Cover Alan!”

Tu tu tu tu! Tu tu tu tu! Tu tu tu tu!

Members of the B team fired his gun at Clark’s order. A hail of bullets tore

through the Sufferers. However, such attacks couldn't completely seal the movements of the Sufferer. The Sufferer lived on instinct to create corpses. They flinched every time they were hit by bullets but didn't stop moving towards Ark.

'I can't fight if I'm surrounded by the quick Sufferers. If that effect disperses then I will receive even more damage. I have to deal with that guy before the frozen effect disappears!'

Ark didn't even turn his head. He had to believe in it.

"Mind Shield!"

-The Mind Shield has been activated.

<A shield with 280 durability has been generated around the body. The shield will reduce all damage by 40~60% until the durability falls to 0. In addition, the effect of Backstab or Sudden Blow will be nullified by 100%>

The message appeared as a transparent sphere wrapped around Ark. He became more familiar with it the more he used it. Because he steadily used the skill in Charem, 250 was the average durability of his Mind Shield.

Tong-! Tong-!

Once he opened his Mind Shield, the rate that he was losing health halved.

"Sonic Sword! Set Bullets Shooting!"

Ark continued to pour a shower of attacks on the limping Sufferer until it died. Then he turned around without taking a rest and faced the Sufferer running at him. Ark quickly drove his sword into its mouth.

Kakakakak!

There was a clanging sound as the iron hit the sharp teeth. The steel was also jammed in so the Sufferer's fangs couldn't move.

“I’ll give you something even better to eat.

Ark opened the cylinder of his Impact Blade and changed the bullets.

“Eat this! Set Bullets Shooting!”

Cheolkeok, cheolkeok, cheolkeok! Pepepeng!

The Sufferer’s head bounced back from the impact. The bullets flew into the Sufferer’s mouth and the head was blown away. Then Ark grabbed the metal item hanging around his chest. It was a hand grenade that was a part of the supplies that all Phoenix members received. Although the grenade couldn’t be compared to the STK-VII that Marquis Martin gave him.....

“Now it is time for dessert!”

Ark shoved the grenade down the Sufferer’s mouth and quickly ran away.

Pepepeng!

The Sufferer exploded and black meat flew everywhere. Even if it was a regular grenade, shoving it into the stomach would make the Sufferer explode.

Kikikiki.....Kikikiki.....

Despite having the head and chest blown apart, the Sufferer was still alive. The upper parts of the body were held together by a few strands of muscle and it seemed like a scene from a horror movie. But Ark had the compassion and fear of a demon once he entered battle mode! And the Sufferer who lost its combat ability was simple for him to take care of.

Kwok kwok kwok! Kwok kwok kwok! Kwok kwok kwok!

Ark stepped on the Sufferer. While Ark had taken care of two, the remaining Sufferer had been battered by the bullets of the B team. Well, it was the one with the shattered head and tentacles so it was easy to clean up. But the real battle started now.

“Damn, Alan! Quickly return! They’re gathering here!”

Clark’s voice was heard from 20 metres away.

“.....Shit!”

When he turned around, dozens of Sufferers were rushing towards the wreckage where the B team was gathered. That was the reason why the B team couldn’t go out and help him when Ark was fighting against the 3 Sufferers. The Phoenix squad’s original target was hundreds of metres away from where the troops were gathered. Kalbern had sent the A, B and C team for a 3 way attack. But while the B team were hiding in the ruins and making their preparations, they were discovered and attacked by the Sufferers. So most of the B team were shooting to prevent the Sufferer’s rush. But Ark had fallen away from the ruins and had to dispose of the Sufferers on his own. However, the number of Sufferers closing in on the B team was starting to become too much. Plus.....

“Alan, some of them have changed to your direction!”

Tu tu tu tu! Tu tu tu tu! Tu tu tu tu!

There was a hail of bullets as soon as Clark’s words finished. The bullets headed towards the Sufferers rushing at Ark. In fact, there wasn’t just one type of Sufferer. The Sufferers who bit was one of the most basic types transformed from civilians, Clark had explained to him. The complicated ones were the other types of Sufferers. They were guards or smugglers who became infected and changed to Sufferers. They were capable of using guns, swords and grenades. The Sufferers Ark defeated just now belonged to the easy type. The Sufferers running towards him despite the machine guns were the nightmare type! But there were some even scarier guys.

Papapapa! Papapapa! Papapapa!

“Ugh!

-You have been hit by a bullet in your thigh!

<Your movement speed will decrease by 30% for 1 minute>

Ark stumbled as he was hit in the thigh by some bullets.

“Heok! The Battle Sufferers! Alan, the Battle Sufferers are going in your direction!”

“Battle Sufferers?”

Ark who was running towards the ruins flinched and turned his head. A Sufferer with a huge body while firing guns caught his eye. It was a robot like monster covered with weird bio tissue. These guys were the Battle Sufferers. The Sufferers wearing battle suits were the strongest type. The combat power of the battle suit wearing Sufferers were incomparable to the normal type. Their weapons were also at a different standard.

“RPG! It is shooting an RPG!”

Pusung!

The Sufferers fired the RPG as soon as he heard the shout. Ark ran away with a pale face. Most RPG rockets had a homing ability. It wasn't easy to escape from a RPG that could change direction or turn 90 degrees. He had no choice but to find some targets in the area that would offset most of the damage. However, Ark only had 20% health left after fighting with the 3 Sufferers. There was no guarantee he could survive even if he avoided a direct hit.

“Dammit! Why me?”

Ark cursed and continued running. Soon the rocket crossed the distance and was only 20 metres away from him. Clark who was watching from the ruins shouted in a desperate voice.

“Damn! Teleport!”

Clark then suddenly appeared in front of Ark.

“Team Leader Clark!”

“Don’t speak because I’m concentrating! Spatial distortion!”

Clark shouted as he started darkly at the rocket. There was a humming sound and the surrounding space distorted. It was what happened afterwards that was a surprise. The rocket entered the distorted area and flew in the wrong direction before exploding.

“Now! Run quickly!”

Clark and Ark started running. They penetrated the shower of bullets and returned to the team. And Ark was suddenly struck by a syringe.

-You have received the medic’s Cell  
Regeneration shot.

<You will recover a total of 500 health  
over 3 minutes>

A medic was the healer type profession in Galaxian.

“Pant pant pant, thank you.”

Ark gasped as he looked at Clark. The 10 metre distorted space had caused the rocket to veer to a different direction. One possible reason was Clark’s psychic body coating. Galaxian’s Esper ability was more than Ark imagined. The Espers had several different areas of expertise. There was the spatial distortion meant that missiles or bullets would change trajectory. Some other unbeatable abilities received with the body coating involved floating in the air for a short time, levitation, spoon bending and Clairvoyance.

“Pant pant, half of my mana has flown away.”

However, these skills used a huge amount of mana and could only be used

4~5 times! But these shortcomings could be conquered.

Tu tu tu tu! Tu tu tu tu! Tu tu tu tu!

“It can’t be helped. If this continues then it will be hard to endure. Used your armoured state!”

Clark shouted towards the team as the Sufferers got closer. Then dozens of shouts were heard from the ruins.

“Armour armament!”

There were flashes as the battle suits were summoned. All members of the Phoenix squad possessed battle suits. It was an amazing scene as 10 teammates called their battle suits at the same time. Among the B team, only 3 of them were humans including Ark. The remaining 7 belonged to the Rama and other alien species. The federation’s battle suit was in the form of a cube and wrapped around the owner, the Rama’s battle suit appeared out of thin air like Ark while the alien species had a metallic liquid that flowed over the body and transformed into a battle suit.

“Now’s the time for a counterattack! Attack!”

Ku kwa kwa kwa kwa! Ku kwa kwa kwa kwa!

Dozens of rays simultaneously shot out. It was unnecessary to say this but the physical abilities and damage increased when wearing the battle suits. However, the rays shooting towards the Surfers didn’t simply have a stronger attack. Different levels of battle suits existed. The battle suits not only improved performance but were also growth type equipment that could be upgraded. There was no mistaking that B team’s battle suits had been upgraded! The strength of the upgraded battle suit was no joke. The Sufferers in the front evaporated with no traces left at all! But the highlight was Clark’s battle suit who was the leader of B team. Although the defense and movement speed of an Esper was low compared to others, they were able to produce a high density energy bullet.

Pejijjik! Pepeng!

The Sufferers hit by Clark's energy bullet flew back 10 metres. The Sufferers that hit the ground lost 30% of their health. It was a wave of destructive power! But it was a technique that used up all the mana of the battle suit and it was stripped away in 5 minutes. Nevertheless! The Espers that still had mana remaining were overwhelming.

Ku kwa kwa kwa kwa! Ku kwa kwa kwa kwa!

The B team who transformed into armoured warriors constantly fired their ammunition. In an instant there was a pile of Sufferers' corpses in front of the ruins.

-Your level has risen!

All the experience he gained also caused him to level up! But there was no time to be glad. There were around 150 Sufferers in this area. Only 30 of them had arrived at this place to attack the B team. However, the battle lasted for a while and there was no end to the Sufferers that kept on joining in.

Kieeeeeeeek!

“Sonic sword!”

Ark pushed back the Sufferers that got past the barrier and looked around.

‘The number of Sufferers that are approaching the barrier keeps on increasing. I don't know how long we can hold up.’

There were too many Sufferers despite the B team's overwhelming power. This was why the B and C teams were supposed to attack from different sides. But then the Sufferers discovered them. So far they were holding up but they would crumble if the situation kept on continuing.

‘But I have no choice but to hold up until the end!’

“Set Bullets Shooting!”

Cheolkeok, cheolkeok, cheolkeok! Pepepeng!

Ark ran around the barrier and attacked the Sufferers. However there was a limit to how much he could do. The Sufferers used the human wave tactic and started to push at the barrier. Some Battle Sufferers used their RPGs and caused the wall to crumble.

“Damn! Alan, Norton, Tiriod, Pekud, block off the Sufferers!”

“Petal Sword!”

“Electromagnetic Hammer!”

The soldiers who specialized in close combat swung their swords and hammers at the Sufferers. The Phoenix members also overpowered the Sufferers in close combat but it was still no use. As soon as they killed some, the spider would crawl out of the bodies and the situation would become more difficult. Despite the efforts of the medics flying around, after a few minutes the B team only had 20~30% health left.

“Not yet, not yet! A bit more!”

A bloody Clark yelled as he struggled.

“Team Leader-nim, it is finished!”

A voice like a gospel was heard from the rear. And the next moment!

Tu tu tu tung! Tu tu tu tung! Tu tu tu tung!

There was a ponderous sound and the Sufferers started falling. Then an information window simultaneously appeared in Ark and the team’s Nymphes.

-The allies’ Turret has been completed in the area of operations!

## Turret (Lv 2)

Attack: 80~120 (+ Special Bullet Damage) Hit Rate: 75%

Durability: 3,000 Shield Gauge: 1,500

A defensive weapon only an engineer can install. The completed Turret will continuously attack all enemies within a 300 metre radius for 10 minutes. It will automatically attack but the engineer can also manually operate it. If it is used in manual mode then the auto aim function will turn off and the hit rate will fall. This turret is Lv 2 and projectile gases can be used as a special bonus.

This was the reason why the B team came here. The B and C team had moved along with engineers to two sides with a range of 300 metres. While the turrets were covering both sides, the Phoenix's main forcers would destroy the Sufferers situated in the centre. This was Kalbern's plan. It was the reason why the B team stayed here despite being discovered by Sufferers. Although the engineers' combat powers were low, they were useful as soldiers due to production skills like the turret. It was a defensive turret that attacked the enemy and once it was successfully installed, it had the combat power of a tank.

Waaaaaaah!

The Battle Sufferers lifted their RPGs the moment they saw the turret.

“Ha, you're just asking for us to kill you. The first target will be you!”

The engineers boarded the turret and made it revolve. And....Tu tu tu tung!  
Tu tu tu tung! Tu tu tu tung!

The 25 mm bullets emerged from the turrets and slammed into the Battle Sufferers. And they collapsed without shooting the RPGs that had been annoying the B team. The engineers used the turrets to intercept the high level Sufferers and helped out team members.

Syu syu syu syu! Kwa kwa kwa kwang!

An explosion occurred to the rear of the Sufferers.

*-Hey, Clark! Are you still alive? We've arrived!*

“C-Captain!”

Clark turned towards the explosion after hearing the voice flowing from the Nymphe. A tank had appeared behind the Sufferers attacking the B team. The tank called the Guardian was a means of transport as well as holding the supplies. Clark shouted angrily as he looked at Kalbern who was sitting down and holding a RPG.

“Damn, you're late!”

*-Bastard, stop whining. We weren't playing around. We also experienced difficulties. It looks like the turret has been completed so get over here. We were late so we'll properly cover you. Launch! Sweep them up!*

Tu tu tu tu! Tu tu tu tu! Tu tu tu tu!

Team A led by Kalbern started shooting the Sufferers.

“Sheesh, I understand. Let's leave! Penetrate and join with the main forces!”

Clark shouted in a thunderous voice and rushed forward. It wasn't just Clark. Ark and the other team members gathered their remaining mental power and pushed through the Sufferers. The turret's automatic firing and A team's cover meant they could soon join Kalbern. The C team also joined them from the other side.

Kieeeeeeeek!

100 Sufferers also flocked towards them.

“They've all gathered. Hey, install the CM-III!”

A member of the A team pulled a small box out of his bag and threw it at Kalbern's order. The box automatically opened and a sparking net 3 metres in

size emerged. 10 more boxes were thrown and formed a barrier around them.

-CM-III

Electromagnetic energy: 2,000

This is used to instantly install an impromptu barrier. The vibrating particles of the CM-III net acts to obstruct the enemy's attacks. But it cannot block a projectile.

CM-III that formed an instant barrier! It was the main method of fighting Sufferers in contaminated areas. The 100 Sufferers had no leader and just rushed forward with no plan. But they just struck the CM-II barrier and couldn't do anything! It was the same when the Sufferers used the gun.

Tu tu tu tu! Tu tu tu tu! Tu tu tu tu!

"Oh my god, that is so terrifying. Guardian, switch to defensive formation!"

The Guardian spread out wings on both sides. Kalbern stared at the Guardian's spread out wings and muttered.

"Now, all subordinates. Don't let yourself be hit by the bullets."

"Please don't say things like that. The Guardian's armour stinks."

"Stinks? It is better than dropping dead."

"Dammit! B team, be careful!"

Clark yelled and dived behind the wings. CM-III stopped the Sufferers' rush and the arms blocked the bullets. This was how the Phoenix squad were able to penetrate contaminated areas filled with 100 Sufferers. Of course, it was also supported by their basic combat power. Anyway, the situation changed 180 degrees once all the members joined up. The 30 Phoenix members fired from being the CM-III barrier and the Sufferers collapsed like dominoes. The Guardian sat in the middle while the engineers operated the turrets on the left

and right side.

Tu tu tu tu! Tu tu tu tu! Tang! Tang! Peng! Peng!

After 20 minutes of attacking with assault rifles, pistols, RPGs and grenades, they finally managed to destroy all the Sufferers in the area.

“Good work. The other soldiers will clean this up so take a rest for now.”

“Phew.....”

Ark sighed and flopped to the ground.

“That was no joke. I never imagined going through so much just crossing 10 km in a city. Why are there so many Sufferers?”

Ark murmured as he saw the corpses of the Sufferers being burnt with flamethrowers. This wasn't the first time fighting against a lot of Sufferers. The nature of the Sufferers was to swarm so the Phoenix's tactic was to deliberately gather the Sufferers together to attack. Every time he faced dozens of them so dealing with 100 took considerably more effort. That's why they took two days to only travel 10 km in Charem. But Ark's words weren't a complaint.

Character Information Window			
<b>Name</b>	Ark (R-02788)	<b>Level</b>	71
<b>Species</b>	Human	<b>Occupation</b>	Pioneer
<b>Fame</b>	3,920	<b>Adventure</b>	720
<b>Health</b>	1,700 (+90)	<b>Mental Power</b>	850
<b>Strength</b>	170 (+23)	<b>Agility</b>	225
<b>Stamina</b>	305 (+18)	<b>Wisdom</b>	20
<b>Intelligence</b>	130	<b>Luck</b>	35
* Title			

Cleaning Foreman (Agility + 3)

Ignorant Destroyer (Wisdom -10, Strength +7, Stamina +7)

Beltana's Hero (Strength, Agility, Stamina, Wisdom, Intelligence, Luck +3)

\* Galactic Federation Contribution: 6,350

\*Body Coating: Survivor

+ Environmental adaptation increases by 50% due to the Survivor coating.

+ The Survivor coating reduces the drop rate of Satiety by 30%.

+ The Survivor coating will reduce fall damage by 50%.

+The 'Clairvoyance' effect of the Survivor coating is applied.

'It is impossible to be dissatisfied.'

Ark laughed as he retrieved the information window. Ark was level 67 when entering Charem and he had faced dozens of enemies. Ark was able to gain 4 levels thanks to the Sufferers. It would've been impossible on his own!

"No, I wouldn't have even made it this far alone."

It was fortunately that Ark emerged in an area infested by Sufferers and was rescued by the Phoenix squad. Anyway, Ark was able to reach this point because of the Phoenix squad.

"But....."

It was approaching the end.

“Hey, why are you muttering to yourself?”

Clark hit him on the back and laughed.

“Are you thinking of a lover at home? Indeed, that is one of the few pleasures for mercenaries like us. But don’t worry, there isn’t much time left now. Look. We’ve been fighting against the Sufferers for 2 days in the contaminated area and finally reached Charem’s central control power. We are here.”

Clark pointed to an enormous building several hundred metres away from them. That huge building was Charem’s central control tower! It was the destination of Ark and the Phoenix squad.

“Hey! A, B and C team, gather your members! This is no time to delay. We will enter the central control tower as soon as everything is organized. Check your equipment carefully!”

The loud voice of Kalbern could be heard. Now for the central control tower!

## Unknown Enemy

“Pant pant pant, pant pant pant.”

Ark breathed roughly and looked around.

‘Has everything here been clean up? Pant pant, I really have no spirit left.’

The place illuminated with a swaying light was a scene of mess and confusion. There were shattered glass and various miscellaneous household goods scattered on the ground with random blood splatters around. This was the atmosphere inside the central control tower where a biohazard occurred and the Sufferers first appeared. Naturally the Sufferers here were like heaven and earth. A Sufferer would jump out every time he turned around or entered a room.

‘I thought it would be easier to fight in an area that wasn’t open like the city.....’

In the city, he would end up surrounded by hundreds of Sufferers once the battle started. But this was a building with narrow passages so it would be easier to take care of his opponent.....that thought was a mistake.

‘Damn, it really popped out of a cabinet.’

Ark muttered as he looked at the sharp teeth marks still on his shoulder. It was from a Sufferer he encountered when leaning against a cabinet. Suddenly the cabinet opened and a Sufferer bit his shoulder. Unlike the city, the Sufferers would really pop out of nowhere.

‘If I have to stay in a place like this for a few more days then I might have a nervous breakdown or a heart attack.’

It wasn’t just the cabinet. Under the desk, in a hallway where the lights weren’t turned on, on the ceiling.....the Sufferers would hide in every possible narrow or dark space. So he couldn’t relax at all. He was always in a

battle state when moving because he never knew when he would encounter a Sufferer. There were only 20~30 inside the tower compared to the 100 in the city but the mental and physical fatigue was many times more. But Ark was holding up well. No, to be exact the Phoenix squad was holding up well.

*-The auditorium is clear. All the Sufferers are destroyed.*

*-This hallway has been cleaned up.*

Voices came from Nymphe network that the Phoenix members were connected to. The team members speaking were reporting after finishing a battle with the Sufferers. Then Ark and Clark who was on top of a broken desk also reported in.

“Yes, this places has also been neatly cleaned. Over.”

*-Okay. Burn the bodies and gather in the auditorium for a break. We will rest and inspect the equipment before entering the next area. Anybody injured should seek treatment from the medics.*

Puhwaaak!

Fire gushed out after Kalbern’s command. The members always cremated the bodies of the Sufferers after a battle ended. If they left the corpse then there was always a chance they would revive again. Ark stared blankly at the flames and muttered.

“It is still amazing every time I look at it.”

“What?”

Clark asked as he jumped down from the desk.

“Pureah using the flamethrower. The fire can move freely like a whip. It will only burn the target. If paper was next to the target then it won’t even move.”

“Eh? You still don’t know about it?”

“What?”

“I’ve spent most of my time with the members so I naturally thought you knew..... Originally Pureah isn’t his name. It is the name of a species. The Pureah lived on a small planet in the Bellin constellation and they are born with the ability to control fire. Therefore the Pureah mostly specialize in Espers of fire. Even if other species receive the pyro kinesis coating, they will find it difficult to match the Pureah’s natural abilities. That guy isn’t an Esper but he has the skill to use a flamethrower.”

‘I thought the red head and eyebrows were strange.....’

Pureah also had a habit of laughing when using the flamethrower. He was normally expressionless but he would become so animated when using a flamethrower on the Sufferers’ bodies. But to think there was a species with this ability in the galaxy. This was also critical information in Galaxian. There might be many times when his opponents were users or NPCs. Thus it was important to find out the characteristics of the opponent! It was like committing suicide if he fought a magician or warrior while ignorant of their characteristics. Especially in Galaxian where there was the different species and body coating. Sometimes the abilities given by the body coating would completely change depending on the species. Therefore he would prefer getting advanced information instead of walking blindly into a fight. The person who had more information would control the battle. Anyway, knowing oneself and the opponent was the key to victory. But it was still the 24th century where space ships were flying around.

“Pureah has taken care of the bodies so let’s head to the auditorium.”

Clark said as he navigated between the household goods on the floor. Ark who was lost in thought suddenly shouted.

“No, I.....”

“What? This time too?”

“Yes, don’t you know? I have to make a profit even if it is one copper.”

Ark smiled as he replied and Clark just shook his head.

“Hah, you’re just picking up junk so you can’t earn that much money. Aren’t you tired?”

“Team Chief-nim!”

One member attracted Clark’s attention.

“Why are you criticizing someone who is working hard? Alan.....Alan has a reason.”

“Ah, yes. I forgot. I’m sorry. I said some unnecessary words.”

Clark blushed and scratched his head with embarrassment after the team member’s words. The reason for this situation.....since the game started, Ark wasn’t a character who would waste his time in vain. Even if he just finished a tough battle, Ark couldn’t just sit back and rest. Ark applied that same mindset when joining the Phoenix squad.

‘Why on earth are they doing this?’

Ark was shocked when he joined the Phoenix squad three days ago.

“You will participate in battle so we will give you consumable supplies like bullets. But you’re not a formal member so distributing loot to you is difficult. We’re mercenaries and are participating in this mission to make money. And the loot is an important source of revenue for mercenaries. You suddenly joined up so the members would be dissatisfied if I give loot to you.”

This was the condition Kalbern gave him when joining. It was to give up on the loot. Ark was depressed but the quest was more important than loot so he accepted. Therefore he never looked at the loot.....

The Phoenix defeated thousands of Sufferers a day so of course they would gain a huge amount of loot. But the members didn’t show any special

interest. They would pick up the loot but there were a variety of japtem that they didn't even look at.

“I won't make money from a little thing like that even if I pick it up.”

“If we pick up things like that then we might run out of bag space.”

This was the member's replies. Their words weren't wrong. Most of the loot from the Sufferers were useless compared to their levels. They were tattered old clothes, a few metal parts and japtem that would only be worth several coppers in stores. But copper was also money. If he gathered copper then it would turn into silver and then into gold! How could he simply leave money like that alone? So Ark rolled up his sleeves and came out. Ark didn't rest while the other members who finished fighting were taking a break. He would search around the burnt bodies of the Sufferers and swept all up the items he found. But soon problems arose.

-There is no empty space  
in the bag!

That was the scariest message to Ark! After Ark arrived at the northern lake, he had obtained various loot from hunting and fish from the lake. He couldn't stop by a store before joining the Phoenix so it was a natural result when scraping up japtem. The method Ark came up with.....

“Can I keep the loot I picked up in the Guardian?”

All the loot they gathered was stored in the tank. But the Guardian was different from the Silver Hand's container truck. It was a cramped vehicle with almost no empty space once the drivers and Kalbern boarded it. Of course Kalbern didn't have a good response to his request.

“Why should I collect that trash?”

Then Ark murmured with a sad expression.

“Mother.....”

That sentence settled everything.

“M-mother?” “That’s right. My mother.....”

“Your mother?” “I’ve been going around without any rest because of my mother’s hospital expenses.....”

“We disliked it without even knowing.....”

“I also have a mother at home. It’s been 10 years since I became a mercenary and left home. I didn’t want to hear her nagging so I didn’t contact her. I don’t know how my mother is living.....”

“Ugh! Don’t speak like that! D-damn! This is a runny nose! I’m not crying!”

“Captain-nim, you have to listen to his request! Yes? That guy’s mother.....”

Ark’s ‘mother had just become pregnant. I have to gain money for my younger sister.’ was what he tried to say. But the Phoenix member’s imagination ran wild and they started misunderstanding.

“Y-yes. Then it can’t be helped.”

Kalbern blushed and nodded. If the situation was like this then Ark didn’t feel the need to remove the misunderstanding. It wasn’t a total lie. The Phoenix members just misunderstood. Anyway, now Ark could just the Guardian tank as well as the Phoenix members’ bags. If he piled up all the japtem in the Guardian then he could get at least 10 gold.....

While Ark was busy thinking.....

“Hey, Alan!”

10 of the members waved their hand and approached.

“What, you guys? We’re supposed to be gathering at the auditorium so why are you here?”

“Did we come to see you?”

The members snorted at Clark and looked at Ark.

“Alan, are you picking up japtem? It isn’t necessary. We’ll collect everything. By the way, do you have any bag space left? The Guardian can’t enter this place so you must have no bag space left. So we dropped by pick it up for you.”

“Huh? No, that.....”

“You brat, we’ve got it. Aren’t we friends now? A fellow soldier’s mother is also our mother. We’ll pick it up from now on so please get some rest. You have to live so you can introduce us to your sick mother.”

A soldier laughed as he placed his arm over Ark’s shoulder. Thanks to Ark’s circumstances (?), he could rest while the Phoenix members picked up the japtem. Of course they would belong to Ark. There was even more.

“Hrmm, please use this medicine as well. I’m giving it to you.”

The members also gave him supplies as well as loot. Among them were equipment that he could use straight away.

-Pioneer’s Pants (Magic)

Item Type: Under Armour    Wearer Restriction: Level 50

Defense: 30 Durability: 42/70

Pants widely used among beginner pioneers. These pants are made from the leather of a monster so they are suitable for most environments. These deluxe leather pants will protect the lower body from various toxic substances in the Outlands. There are rumours that it also has an effect on increasing energy. This is a necessity!

<When exposed to a natural toxic environment, damage is reduced by 15%>

\* You have gathered 2 items of the same series and the set effect has been

applied.

+ Set Effect +

<Pioneer's Pants><Pioneer's Boots>: Harmful Environment Immunity +10%

It was a level 50 equipment, Pioneer's Pants! Ark could finally change out of the level 20 beginner's pants. Furthermore, he also obtained the Pioneer's Boots from the forest near the northern lake so he created a set effect. It was the level 50 magic set that could be easily obtained. Anyway, he was given it for free! This was all due to the soldier's misconception.

'If I treat them well then the NPCs will give quite a lot!'

This was a law of virtual reality games and the philosophy that governed Ark's behaviour. Ark had been using the method to raise the NPC's intimacy throughout his many years of gaming. It had been 3 days since he joined the Phoenix squad and Ark hadn't hesitated to jump in to help the soldiers. He picked up the japtem and even used his tool box and Facilities Maintenance to repair their equipment and clean the Guardian.

"I am a rookie."

Ark said with a bright smile!

"Doing this even when your mother is ill....."

Their reaction was 100% expected!

-Intimacy with Kalbern has increased by 100.

-Intimacy with Clark has increased

by 100.....

‘Huhuhu, this degree is enough.’

Ark had the innate talent of selling things to Ark.

“I wanted to see it again.”

A soldier muttered as he saw the octopus attached to Ark’s head.

Bbok bbok bbok bbok! Bbok bbok bbok bbok!

The octopus on his head was the Charenjok’s token. Ark was almost always using it ever since Bakum upgraded it. It wasn’t that useful before so he often forgot about it but now it could continue to grow. And it was surprisingly popular among the Phoenix squad. It wasn’t because of its ability to recover. Even if it was upgraded, it only recovered 2 health every 4 seconds. That wasn’t enough to have an influence on battle. The medic’s injection healed 500 health so it was impossible for them to prefer the recovery ability of the octopus. The members were interested in the octopus itself.

“It moves while on the head. The bbok bbok is really no joke.”

“That’s not all. It wiggles and crawls when placed on the ground.”

“This isn’t a common mechanism.”

The Charenjok’s token would move around by itself when he placed it on the ground.

It was cute and its popularity exploded! It was to the extent that a soldier even tried to exchange a level 80 sword for it.

“I’m sorry. This is a token of my friendship with the Charenjok so I can’t sell it.”

But Ark refused. It was a level 80 sword but the Charenjok’s token was a growth type item. The recovery ability wasn’t useful at the moment but it would steadily grow. He couldn’t give up the benefits of such an

item. And.....in fact Ark had become quite attached to the Charenjok's token these days.

'In the past I was accompanied by my summons so I was never bored.....'

When he first started Galaxian he hadn't been bored. First he was busy trying to learn the system on R-14 and then Tori sold him to the Silver Hand before he was arrested and sent to Beltana. But Ark had been extremely bored when exploring the northern lake. Ark spent 10 days staring at the Nymphe's screen while sitting on the air board and was so bored he felt like dying. It became so bad he started thinking out loud. The octopus' animation reminded Ark of his summons so he was comforted by it.

"Sheesh, it can't be helped."

"If you ever get tired of it then tell me. I'll give you 100 gold for it."

"Now let's go. We should go to the auditorium because Captain is waiting."

"My body isn't the same as before. I should have a medic look at it."

"Your head isn't the same as before."

The members chattered noisily as they headed towards the auditorium. Ark could also go straight to the auditorium because they gathered all the japtem already. But Ark didn't rest even when he arrived at the auditorium. Ark had a lot of work to do even if he didn't need to collect the japtem. One of them was hacking.

-Hacking (Lv1):  
Proficiency 244/500

"I still have passed halfway."

Ark sighed as he checked the skill information window. Galaxian's skill proficiency rose quite slowly compared to his previous game. Anyway, the 4 star rated skill Hacking was one of the slowest to rise. Hacking wasn't a combat skill so the proficiency couldn't be raised in a short period of time.

He needed to hack a system to increase it. And Ark hadn't been impatient. There was no reason to raise his Hacking level right away. But the situation changed a short time ago.

'I haven't received a reply to my message so what on earth could've happened?'

Ark had sent a message to Kara, Marquis Martin's intelligence agent when he first entered the contaminated area. However, there was no reply from Kara over the last three days. Charem was currently sealed off but internal communication was still possible. Yet he couldn't contact Kara even when he was in Charem. But no one could escape from Charem at the moment. Then there was only one answer!

'Perhaps he was in the contaminated area and encountered the Sufferers?'

That was the only reason why he wouldn't reply. Naturally Ark was curious about the black bag placed in a corner of his bag. It was the bag Marquis Martin asked him to give to Kara.

'This might be an item that will help the intelligence agent with his mission. It might be something like the STK-VII. If Kara already died then it won't be a problem if I use the item to help with my mission. Marquis Martin only told me to deliver it to Kara! Huhuhu, he never mentioned anything about what I should do if he dies.'

However.....

-This bag is protected by a security device.

Enter the security code or use Invaders to hack and release the lock. The security rating of this lock is level 6. Your present hacking techniques can only release level 1~3 locks.

<If you don't know the password then try against after raising the level of

your hacking skill>

As expected from Marquis Martin. The bag was protected by a strong lock. But Ark had no intention of giving up this long awaited chance.

‘If I raise hacking one more level then I can release a level 6 lock. I need to raise the proficiency and grab the contents of the bag before meeting Marquis Martin again!’

Of course there weren’t that many security locks to hack. However, there were other ways to raise the skill proficiency. Although the degree of proficiency was only 1/10 of the amount he gained when hacking security locks, he could hack the circuits in japtem like when he first learnt the skill.

‘Fortunately the central control power has many mechanical parts.

This was another reason why Ark gathered up all the japtem. If he took it to the store then he could only receive several copper from it! Meanwhile hacking the japtem would raise the skill proficiency by 1! If he gathered 100 then he could raise it by 100. Ark’s current hacking proficiency was 244. If he hacked 256 more times than he could reach level 2.

‘I have 50 mechanical parts right now. I need to obtain 200 more mechanical parts before meeting Marquis Martin again.’

Ark connected one machine to the Nymphé.

-This circuit has a security device.

Enter the security code or use Invaders to hack and release the lock.

Attempt to hack? Y/N

“Okay. Start!”

When he started hacking it was a simple level 1 mini game. While the other members were taking a break, Ark sat in a corner with the octopus on his head and focused on the mini game.

Byong byong! Byong byong! Byong byong!

How much time had passed?

‘Huh? What the?’

Ark flinched and raised his head. He felt like something was moving within a dark hallway. It was a dark place with no light but Ark could see thanks to Clairvoyance. Although he closely searched every corner, Ark couldn’t see anything different.

‘Something seemed to move.....is there a reason for that feeling?’

“Hey, Alan! Get ready! We’re moving to the next place!”

At that time he heard Kalbern and Clark calling. Ark stared at the hallway before shaking his head and rising.

‘If it was a Sufferer then it would attack immediately.’

Shortly after Ark walked towards Clark.

Susususu. Susususu.

Something moved in the darkness.

---

“Hyung-nim?”

The person with big eyes flinched and turned around. He saw a man with a huge figure nearing.

“Pant pant pant, Hyung-nim? What does that mean?”

“No, that.....I thought I heard Hyung-nim’s voice.....”

“It is your imagination. Leader Clem said that Hyung-nim is on the north side of the planet. That is thousands of kilometres away from where we are.”

“I know that already. I understand but.....”

The person with big eyes muttered with an uneasy look.

“What if something happened to Hyung-nim?”

“You don’t have to worry about him. Hey, who is Hyung-nim? He is a hero, a hero. He changed his prisoner status to that of a hero. We don’t need to worry about him.”

“.....I guess.”

The person with large eyes blinked and nodded. Then he opened a notepad on his Nymphe and started to pour out his thoughts.

*Dear Ark hyung-nim.*

*We have just arrived at the mountain that is near Istana’s equator. The dense jungle with a sizzling heat is like a dream after Beltana. There was a time where we lost all hope of surviving. Hyung-nim is the one who helped us escape from Beltana and gave us new hope. We couldn’t help but overflow with delight after hearing Hyung-nim talk about making our own group. At that time we promised. We would try our best to meet Hyung-nim’s expectations.*

*The Silver Hand members are also close to Hyung-nim and are generously teaching us combat skills. Once Cupa, Hedro, Reben and Koned finish their duties after 10 hours, they would receive separate attacker training from the Silver Hand. Apart from the heavy weapons training, Cupa is also being taught gymnastics. His body has become so tattered that he would vomit a few times every day.*

*Ah, now.....*

“Weeeeeek!”

When the person paused and turned around, he saw Cupa vomiting near him. Cupa was double the size of normal humans so the amount he ate and vomited up was different. The smell was no joke so the man moved to the opposite side where two people caught his eye. Their bodies were bruised all over. The man sighed and turned back to his Nympe.

*But Cupa is nothing compared to Berad and Ralph. Berad and Ralph are training in sword mastery. They have to do things like picking up items with chopsticks, climbing a waterfall with bare hands, getting past a bee swarm with deadly poison.....*

*It is training that can't possibly be understood. I don't know whether their sword mastery is increasing but Ralph and Berad seem to be getting more durable. Last time they just laughed after being sent to face a grizzly bear. It is clear that their courage has grown.*

*As expected, Kalliben and Beleol are becoming more proficient in sniping thanks to Clem's training. There is no other choice. A sniper's hit rate is the most important thing so they would miss a meal if they miss. The distance to the target also increases every day so Kalliben and Beleol are always starving.*

The man turned around and looked at two people in a corner. Kalliben and Beleol were enviously watching the Silver Hand members eating.

*Oh, grandfather Mellin is also difficult to train because of his age so he is being taught to handle explosives from the engineers. Huhuhu, the medical technology these days is really great. Even if limbs are separated because of an explosion, it would be perfectly regrown after a few hours. Well, the length of the limb would sometimes not fit and it would move strangely.....*

The person wrote up to that point.

“Hey Hegel! What are you doing? Did you do all the exercises I gave you yesterday? There will be a test soon!”

“Huh? Ah yes! Heksu ajusshi, I will go soon!”

The person who was Hegel said with surprise and busily moved his hands.

*I have been taking lessons in being a Scavenger under Heksu ajusshi.*

*Heksu ajusshi seems happy that he has a successor. He has been with the Silver Hand for 50 years and is passing on all his knowledge to be. Therefore he gives me a bunch of homework every day. Every day I can only get 2 hours of sleep. This pain will definitely allow me to grow.*

*I am looking forward to it. The day when we can meet Hyung-nim again and build our business. So I want to tell Hyung-nim this.*

*Hyung-nim.....*

“Ya! This bastard! What are you doing? Why aren’t you coming quickly?”

“Yes! I-I’m going! Right now!”

Hegel’s hands moved even faster at Heksu’s roar.

*Please help!*

*This place is a hell more terrible than Beltana! Please set up the company before we die!*

*Hyung-nim, where are you? Please help us!*

But Hegel was unaware of something. The torturous training course set by the Silver Hand. It was the training program that Ark developed. Ark recalled his past training with Lee Myung-ryong and applied that philosophy to the program.

“This guy, do you want me to rearrange your spirit? Aren’t you a part of Ark’s Royal Guards? Ark went through even more harsh training when he was part of the Silver Hand!”

Thus the Silver Hand members steadily proceeded with Ark’s training program. Thanks to that the Royal Guards grew every day.....

*-Hyung-nim, I want to see you!*

Their loyalty to Ark also rose.

---

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Tak tak tak tak! Tak tak tak tak!

Dozens of footsteps resounded through the hall. They were the soldiers of the Phoenix squad carrying assault rifles! Several groups were clearing obstacles or checking various passages. The reports of people in those passages could continuously be heard.

*-The right side hallway is clear. There are no abnormalities.*

*-The second hallway on the left is also clear. There are no abnormalities.*

“Maintain an alert formation for the moment.”

Kalbern lifted his RPG as he strode across the hall. He was heading towards a metal door at the end of the hall.

“We’ve finally arrived.”

“This is.....?”

Ark asked with narrow eyes as he approached Kalbern. Clark who was on Ark’s other side smiled and replied.

“Isn’t it obvious? It is an elevator.”

“Elevator? We’re using an elevator?”

“Then? Do you expect us to walk to the 40th floor of the control tower? The first 5 floors are general facilities so this elevator is the only way to reach the upper floors that are the security areas. But only someone who holds a special security card can access the elevator on the 5th floor. So we are taking the elevator to the 39th floor. Our destination is the management system on the 40th floor. We only need to go up one level after reaching the 39th floor with

the elevator.”

“Then.....?”

“Our mission will soon be over.”

Ark stared at the elevator after hearing Clark’s words. This was a building in a game but the central control tower was also similar to a dungeon. That’s why Ark who was a user viewed using the elevator as a type of cheat. But they had already spent a day and a half in the central control tower. If they hadn’t taken the breaks then they probably could’ve reached the 5th floor in one day. If they maintained that same speed then it would’ve taken 10 days to reach the 40th floor. But they could use the elevator to climb to the 39th floor in one day!

“Is the elevator working properly?”

“Even if the tower is occupied by the Sufferers, all the functions are still working. Safety devices were prepared for situations like this. If the system wasn’t working then we would have no reason to come here in the first place. Because Charem wouldn’t be sealed off.”

“Indeed.”

Ark nodded. He hadn’t thought about it but this was also good news for Ark.

‘It’s good that I don’t need to be stuck in this place for ten days. Although I haven’t raised my hacking skill, I don’t have to give the bag back to Marquis Martin. I can just pretend ignorance while slowly raising my skill. It is better than looking for mechanical parts in a place like this.’

The situation in Charem would be quickly settled once the management system was recaptured. He could complete two major quests at once. He gained a lot of experience from hunting the Sufferers but that couldn’t be compared to the quest compensation. While Ark was busy thinking.....

“That’s it. It is working!”

Kalbern insert the special security card and password in the device next to the elevator and the metal doors opened. It was the direct elevator to the 39th floor!

“Everybody board it. We are going up!”

The scattered members gathered at Kalbern’s command. Kalbern pressed the button to the 39th floor after confirming that all 30 members boarded and the elevator started to climb. The alert crew started to relax after the elevator doors closed.

“Hah, it is almost over.”

“Yes. This is the first time during my 12 years as a mercenary that I’ve had such a horrible experience. A disease that causes corpses to move. And they also smell awful.”

“But if we settle the problem then the lords of Charem promised that we would be greatly compensated.”

“There was no way to escape from Charem and we were also promised a lot of money so we had no choice but to accept the mission. I’d still prefer hunting monsters over this. I will be glad when I don’t need to smell the Sufferers anymore. Besides, we can’t believe that Java bastard. The fellow is always talking nonsense. He might speak differently once this finishes.”

“That’s why Captain firmly negotiated before accepting this mission.”

“Then it is fortunate.”

“Anyway, after this finishes I’m going back to my hometown and resting for 1 year.”

“Me too. In fact, a little while ago I heard that my wife gave birth to a daughter. Huhuhu, I’m going to use my holiday time to visit them. After I return home I’m going to take my wife and daughter to a resort planet.”

‘.....Eh?’

Ark looked around blankly. He suddenly felt an ominous feeling while listening to the member's conversations. But he didn't notice any particularly strange signs. Ark was uncomfortable because of the contents of the conversations. Anybody who watched a lot of movies or dramas would realize that the person who talked about taking a trip with their family would be killed moments later! There was a 99% chance of them dying. It was a death flag! It was the behavioural pattern of people who would soon die in a movie. Ark felt that feeling after hearing the member's dialogue.

'This isn't a movie or a drama and the well-trained Phoenix had fought against hundreds of Sufferers with no deaths but.....'

He was uncomfortable. He suddenly became really uncomfortable.

"Should you be saying something like that when the job isn't over yet?"

"Alan's words are correct."

Kalbern silently nodded his head.

"This elevator is heading to the 39th floor. We don't know what will happen so you shouldn't relax. And.....haven't you guys seen the movies? It is common sense that the people who say things like this would be the first ones to die."

Kalbern had the same idea as Ark.

"Don't say anything else. Huhuhu, especially if you want to live longer."

Kalbern's words were effective. The squad members all closed their mouths after that. They were quiet as the elevator rushed to the highest level.

-36, 37, 38.....

And shortly before it reached the 39th floor!

"We've arrived! We don't know what is out there so be alert....."

Kwakwang!

There was a roaring sound and the elevator shook just before it was about to stop.

“Heok! What, what the? What’s going on?”

“Everybody calm down! Clark, what happened?”

“I’m not sure. We seem to have received a strong impact from outside!”

“Damn, the elevator has stopped moving! Engineers, check the elevator’s system!”

“Understood!”

Kwakwang!

Then the roaring sound was heard again. This time the impact was larger than before and the lights went out. Sparks flew all over the place as the elevator was engulfed in darkness. The members hurriedly turned on the flashlights attached to their firearms. Then a black shadow passed by a gap in the ceiling made from the impact just now.

“Captain-nim, there is something out there!”

“Sufferers?”

“I-I don’t know. It was too quick.....”

‘It isn’t a Sufferer! It is something else!’

The lights went out so the members with infrared scopes or flashlights wouldn’t have seen it but Ark could see exactly what it was thanks to Clairvoyance. Of course he couldn’t see everything but it definitely wasn’t a Sufferer. It was many times larger than that.....

There was something huge! Kalbern turned around and said.

“Remove your hands from the trigger. If everybody fires bullets blindly then we can die! We need to escape outside here. Engineer, what is your status? It is possible to open the door with manual manipulation?”

“The security is tight so it will take some time!”

“We don’t have time to wait! Right now.....”

Kwakwang!

There was another roaring sound before Kalbern’s words ended. Then an engineer screamed.

“Oh my god! It is falling! The magnetic levitation device of the elevator shattered!”

They didn’t need to hear the engineer’s report to realize that.

Wiiing-!

He felt a sinking feeling in his stomach like he was on a huge ride. The elevator was falling to the bottom.

‘Dammit, I knew it felt strange!’

Ark grabbed the walls of the elevator and bit his lip. The group of 30 people was falling from the 30th floor. The impact on their bodies would transcend imagination, especially if they were wearing body armour. They would be smashed to death!

Smashed.....smashed.....smashed.....

That word echoed through his head.

‘Don’t make me laugh! How much have I struggled so far? Will I lose all my levels and skill proficiency because I’m stuck in this elevator?’

“Clark-nim! One moment!”

Ark raised his head and ran up to Clark. He took out Fading Steel and loaded the Armour Piercing Bullets before aiming at the ceiling.

“Set Bullets Shooting!”

Cheolkeok, cheolkeok, cheolkeok! Pepepeng!

A huge hole was made in a corner of the ceiling. Ark moved to the other side and continuously fired bullets and holes were opened on both sides. Kalbern raised his head and shouted.

“That’s right. Norton, Tiriod, the ceiling!”

“Ohhh! Electromagnetic Hammer!”

Norton and Tiriod swung their hammers and sparks flew. There was a huge noise and the ceiling flew away. Once the ceiling was opened, the sight of flames occurring where the elevator met the rails could be seen. Kalbern looked at the members and yelled with a desperate expression.

“Everybody follow me lead!”

Tutung! Bump! Chwaaaak!

Kalbern manipulated his Nymphe and a wire anchor was shot from his buckle. The anchor tightened around the rail and Kalbern rose up out of the ceiling. Kalbern hung from the rail and quickly became far away.

“There is no time! The elevator will soon crash to the floor! Quickly escape!”

Tutung! Tutung! Tutung!

The remaining members instantly escaped from the elevator using the same method as Kalbern. Clark was manipulating his Nymphe when he flinched and stared at Ark.

“Alan, you. You don’t have this equipment so can you escape? It might be difficult but you can come with me.....”

“I am fine. Please escape first!”

“I will believe in you. Follow me immediately!”

Tutung!

Clark then flew out of there. Now Ark was the only remaining one! Ark immediately searched through his bag and took out the Wire Camera. This

was why he wanted Clark to escape first. Ark accompanied the squad for three days so he knew about the wire anchor equipment. It was a device for 1 person. If this was a normal situation then it might withstand the weight of 2 people. But in this situation there was a risk that the extra weight would cause the anchor to come loose. Ark knew this so he didn't take the chance to escape with Clark.

'There's no time left. I will soon crash at this speed.'

Ark quickly threw the Wire Camera outside the ceiling. He operated the wire with the Nymphe and was able to wind it around the rail. Ark grabbed the wire and was pulled out of the ceiling. 10 seconds barely passed when he heard a crashing noise underneath his feet.

Kwa kwang! Kwa kwa kwa kwang!

It was the sound of the elevator slamming into the floor.

"I-I lived!"

Ark breathed out while dangling from the wire. 10 seconds. If he delayed for 10 seconds more than he would've been crushed like a tomato. Then Kalbern's desperate voice was heard from the Nymphe.

*-Did everyone emerge? Who was the last one out? Report!*

*-This is Clark. There was only one person remaining when I left!*

*-Alan, answer us! Are you okay?*

"Yes, I've escaped!"

The members sighed with relief at Ark's answer.

*-Okay. Everybody is well. But we can't be relieved yet. There is still that guy that hit the elevator hiding somewhere. And the Sufferers are outside so it is dangerous to move individually. So the plan will change. My present location is near the 27th floor. All members should meet in the middle on the 16th floor.....jijijiji.....*

The Nymphe suddenly started emitting static.

“Captain-nim, what happened? Please respond Captain-nim!

*-Something dangerous is happening!*

*–The member who is closest go and check the Captain’s safety! Who is next to Captain-nim?*

*–It’s me! I.....heok!*

*–What’s going on? Hey! Puroki, answer! Damn! Answer!*

Shouts continued emerging from the Nymphe. Another member screamed over the Nymphe.

*–There is something above me! Something.....something.....an absurd speed....wahhhhh!*

Screams echoed like a chain from the Nymphe. He didn’t know what was going on but something was definitely happening. The voices of the Team Leaders turned hysterical as the situation changed.

*-Dammit! Check what is going on!*

*–But it is happening above us! This is an emergency situation! All squad members descend! It will be good if you can hide! Move as quickly as possible!*

*–Heok! T-that....wahhhh!*

*–Who? Who was it this time?*

*–I don’t know! I can’t confirm it directly....cough!*

*–T-that sound.....something is descending at a huge rate from above....wahhhh!*

The correspondence with the squad members kept of being cut off. 10 members had already disappeared after screaming.

Dudududu! Dudududu!

The elevator shaft shook as the roaring sound was heard again. It was coming from the top! Something was descending at a huge rate. There were flashes from above him and shots started ringing out. But the roaring didn't stop. The deafening screams got closer to Ark as the communication continued being disrupted.

'The Phoenix members can't fight properly but the opponent clearly isn't ordinary. I don't know the identity but it clearly isn't a Sufferer. I can't fight it while dangling on the wire. First I have to move out of this shaft. No, it will be quicker to descend to the bottom based on my location.'

Ark grabbed the wire attached to the rail. He could tell the monster was quickly descending. He kept on hearing gunshots and screams and he couldn't tell how many members were left. No, Ark couldn't do anything even if he grasped that fact.

"Pant pant pant, pant pant pant."

Ark moved his arm like crazy and climbed down the wire.

*-Dammit! This.....heok! T-this is unbelievable!*

'This voice is? Clark! It is Clark!'

Ark flinched and looked up.

*-Dammit! Alan, run away! Bring it on you bastard! I am Clark of the Phoenix squad!*

Kwa kwa kwa kwang!

Clark's scream could be heard as an explosion occurred above him. Then no more screams or gunshots could be heard. Clark was the member that escaped just before Ark! It meant that thing descending had slaughtered all the members of the squad.

"Oh my god....how is this....in such a short time....."

Ark looked up the shaft and stuttered.

Dudududu! Dudududu!

There was a moment of hesitation before that ‘thing’ roared again. The explosion this time was only 15 metres away from Ark. And Ark was still dangling from the wire. When considering the speed it was impossible for Ark to run away!

“Damn.....of all things.....a place like this.....”

Ark looked up with a hopeless look. And after a while he could see a black shadow incoming.

Susususu!

Then something wound around Ark’s ankle.

## In the X.....

“What.....what the? Wah!”

Ark cried out as something wrapped around his ankle. Something had emerged from a vent in the wall to wind around his ankle. Then there was an increased sense of power as his ankle was tugged and grabbing onto the rail with both hands couldn't stop him from being sucked into the vent.

“Ugh! Don't make me laugh! I won't go that easily! Fading Steel-II!”

The side of his bag automatically opened and Fading Steel-II emerged. Ark who was dragged into the vent turned his body with a pleasant smile. And he aimed the muzzle at the guy pulling him inside.

*–Don't be a fool. Do you want to die?*

“Heok! Such a thing! Y-you.....”

*–Shhh! Be quiet!*

He (?) approached and covered Ark's mouth.

Dudududu! Dudududu!

At that time a loud roar was heard from outside the vent. It sounded like the mystery creature that attacked the Phoenix members! It was the sound of something crashing into the ground at a tremendous speed. His heart really jumped as he hid in the small vent from the ghastly monster. Then he heard the sound of snapping from below. And signs that the monster was getting further away. Judging from the sounds heard, the monster seemed to have hit the bottom of the elevator shaft and entered the 5th floor.

*–We somehow managed to avoid it.*

A sighing voice was heard from behind him. Ark's mouth was then unblocked and he was asked.

*–Who are you?*

That was what Ark wanted to ask. Well he survived thanks to that guy dragging him into the vent but he still wanted to ask. However Ark could already grasp 50% of the person's identity. Surprisingly the person in the small vent was a Charenjok! The octopus type alien Charenjok. How did the octopus.....a question appeared in his head.

“Are you one of the Charenjok who disappeared from the prohibited area?”

*–Prohibited area! Where did you hear that from?*

The octopus grabbed Ark's collar and shouted.

“I asked Elder Bakum of the Charenjok who lives near the lake.”

*–Bakum? You met Elder Bakum?*

“Yes, he is the reason why I entered Charem. I'm very friendly with the Charenjok. While visiting the northern lake, I managed to encounter the Charenjok living there. I heard from the elder that Charenjok have gone missing in the prohibited area and I requested to investigate the area. Then I was swept into Charem while investigating.”

*–That's right. Is that how you managed to obtain the Charenjok's token?*

“Eh? How do you know that.....?”

Ark's eyes widened. He had a battle with the Sufferers before riding the elevator. He had used the Charenjok's token and then placed it in his bag. So how did the octopus know about the Charenjok's token? The octopus removed his hands and sighed.

*–It is like you said. I'm a Charenjok who went missing from the prohibited area.*

“I didn't think the Charenjok were still alive.”

*–Heh, I also thought I was dead when I was sucked into that black*

*hole. But....you must've seen it as well if you came through the black hole. The net spread in front of the huge drain. I was caught in the net and captured by the androids in charge of those facilities. And....I was given this.*

The octopus pointed to a collar around his neck with a bitter expression. The black ring fastened tightly had an octopus head and 8 characters carved on it.

*–This makes it so I can't leave the designated area. If I try to take it off or step over the boundaries then it will explode. In other words, these collars are evidence of slaves. Elder Bakum refused to seek asylum with the federation and chose to live in the Outlands. I was caught as a slave but I would rather choose death. But I couldn't risk all the colleagues with me dying.*

“Colleagues? Then all the Charenjok that disappeared in the prohibited area are alive?”

*–Yes, all the Charenjok that didn't encounter the lobsters in the prohibited area are still alive. Lord Java turned us into slaves and made us clean the pipes of this place.*

The octopus sighed with a depressed expression. Once again, the octopuses were really a species optimized to clean pipes as proven on R-14. Their flexible body meant they could enter everywhere and they had the ability to heal minor wounds. It seemed they were forced to clean plumbing no matter where they went. It was a cursed ability.

*–I was living as a slave with no chance to escape when this happened suddenly. A black spirit spread after people died....and they became alive again. It was the appearance of the Sufferers.*

“Do you know why it spread?”

*–I don't know. It just happened all of a sudden. The dead woke up and started killing others and the infection spread. Lord Java and some people managed to escape but I was stuck here. The area my collar is set to is the central*

*control tower. Therefore I'm confined to this tower unless I want my head to explode. But the pipes don't spread throughout the whole building. And nobody knows the pipes as well as I do. I managed to avoid the damage by hiding in the pipes. I was going around to check the situation when I discovered you on the 4th floor.*

“4th floor?”

Ark asked with a frown. He was reminded of something. After a battle he was resting while raising his hacking proficiency when he felt something strange. That strange feeling had occurred on the 4th floor.

“Then when I felt like I was being watched.....”

*–It was me. I saw the Charenjok's token on your head at that time.*

“Then why didn't you say something?”

*–You were with the soldier belonging to Lord Java. You might've had the Charenjok's token but I didn't know who you were and what purpose you came here for. So I thought I would follow you secretly and watch for a while. I missed you when you entered the elevator but then I heard the deafening roar. Therefore I entered the vent to check the situation.*

This was the process the octopus went through to help Ark.

*–Now it is your turn. How did you end up with Java's soldiers when you were sucked into the black hole like us?*

“I managed to escape outside the water tank and accidentally met them. Their purpose is to recapture the management system at the top of this building to release the seal. I can't escape from here until the seal is released so I accompanied them.”

*–So that's what happened.*

“But the thing that attacked my colleagues and I.....what is it?”

*–I don't know. I know it is a huge being different from the other things inside*

*here but I haven't seen it directly. I don't even dare approach it.*

'Certainly.....'

He understood that feeling. Ark had gasped with fear hanging inside that dark shaft as he heard it approaching him. It was obviously something with a high level. It really felt like when watching a horror movie and then a ghost like Sadako jumped out of the TV. The atmosphere itself was frightening. It was the same in this case.

'I only survived thanks to the Charenjok.....'

-Multiple Communication Network

Network Name: Phoenix Channel: 1  
(main connection)

Connection Staff: 0

Ark sighed as he saw the Nymphe screen. The multiple communication network was like a chat room system where team members could communicate with each other. There was a distance restriction but he could communicate with all members connected to the channel. But currently there were 0 people connected. If he considered the previous situation then the only possible situation was that they all died.

'I'm left alone in a place like this.....'

The control tower was infested with Sufferers and he had to get to the top by himself. Once again, this was the original outbreak site. The Sufferers in this area showed the symptoms first so they were higher level. And a huge, unidentified monster wandering around this place was many times more dangerous. The thought of being left alone in this place made him gloomy. Right now the chances of survival wasn't high.

'In addition, there is all the loot on the Guardian that I collected!'

The Phoenix were wiped out so he could look for it. If he sold all the items in the Guardian then he could get 10 gold for it! But they were items that he went around for 3 days collecting without any breaks. The thought of all that japtem flying away.....

‘No, that isn’t the problem now!’

Ark sighed and shook his head. The Phoenix’s main duty was to recapture the management system. If that mission was accomplished then he would have to wait in Charem until he died. It wasn’t the time to worry about japtem. But the Phoenix members he trusted were killed in battle. Judging from the environment around him, Ark was currently on the 10th floor. Ark had no choice but to climb the remaining 30 floors by himself.

‘The elevator that connected to the 39th floor was smashed....that means I have to climb 30 floors infested with Sufferers. This isn’t a place where Sufferers would gather together like in the contaminated areas.....but I’m still climbing 30 floors alone.’

Currently Ark could only deal with 3~4 Sufferers at once. Of course this wasn’t an open place like the city so he could avoid facing dozens of opponents at once. But there was no guarantee he wouldn’t find more than 4 while going up the 30 floors. Furthermore, it had taken the Phoenix members 1 and a half days to move 5 floors. When he was alone he would need to pay attention to avoid being attacked by more than 3~4 Sufferers. He couldn’t guess how long it would take him to reach the top. The probability of success was only 10%. This quest was already almost finished since he lost the Phoenix squad.

‘But that doesn’t mean it is impossible!’

Ark finished organizing his thoughts and asked the octopus.

“Do you know the complete layout of all the pipes in this place?”

*-Sadly.*

“Could you tell me the layout? Like I said before, the reason I came here was to win back the management system. If the pipes connect to the management system then this problem can be settled.”

The octopus had survived for 1 month in the Sufferer infested central tower. It meant the pipes was a relatively safe place. The long, deformed limbs of the Sufferer meant they couldn't navigate through the narrow pipes. In other words, if he moved through the pipes then he didn't need to worry about surprise attacks from the Sufferers.

‘If I can reach the top floor with the pipes.....’

*–I don't care about what happens to Charem.*

The octopus replied in a testy voice. He grasped the collar around his neck as he said.

*–Lord Java is the one who made me a slave. So why should I worry about his city? Although I'm now living in the pipes, it isn't that different from my normal life.*

“But you won't be able to endure this situation for long.”

*–I guess. My food is already running out. But if the management system isn't recaptured then won't Java also die? Therefore I don't care if I die. I'd rather die with Java then to live like a slave.*

‘This damn octopus!’

Ark angrily stared at the octopus. But he could also understand the octopus' words. If Ark accidentally entered Charem and was captured as a slave then he wouldn't be able to endure it either. Like the octopus said, he wouldn't be free even if Charem was saved.

‘Is there a way to convince him?’

Then something Ark forgot about popped into his head.

“Wasn't another group of Charenjok dragged here a while ago?”

*–Other Charenjok? Another group of Charenjok disappeared in the prohibited area?*

“Yes, that’s why Elder Bakum wanted me to investigate the prohibited area. We assume that some young Charenjok went looking for their parents in the prohibited area and disappeared. I actually thought the children were dead until I met you just now. But if other Charenjok survived then there is a possibility that the children are alive. If the android managing the water facilities captured them then Java might’ve turned them into slaves. Maybe Java brought them into the safe zone or they might be held somewhere in the water facilities.”

*–T-that!*

The octopus’ heads turned red hot. He was upset. Ark looked at the octopus and continued.

“If Charem’s problem isn’t solved then those children might end up as the Sufferer’s prey. One of them might be your child.”

*–I-I am a bachelor!*

The octopus snapped angrily. Ark had misunderstood. But he just continued talking without any signs of embarrassment.

“But they are children. If Charem is left in this state then they would 100% turn into Sufferers. In this situation you need to save Charem no matter how unscrupulous Java is. No, I’ll personally persuade Java to release everybody. You know that I have the Charenjok’s token. Please believe me.”

*-Uhh.....*

The octopus nodded.

*–I can’t pretend after hearing such words. I understand. I will help. But I can’t enter the place with the management system either. That’s because this collar doesn’t allow me to go beyond the 39th floor. If I try to climb anymore*

*then POP.....you understand? In addition, there are a large number of security devices on the 39th floor. But I know someone that might be able to help.*

“Someone who might help?”

*–Come along.*

The octopus nodded and turned around before suddenly asking.

*–I am called Tuntun. You are?*

“I.....”

Ark smiled and replied.

“I am Ark. I’m a friend of the Charenjok.”

---

“This place is?”

He followed Tuntun for a long time. The long pipes finally ended and a wide space appeared. Several hundred pipes crisscrossed in a complicated pattern 20 metres above the wide space.

*–I found this place while living here. This is a hiding spot for the Charenjok that Java doesn’t know about. And now.....the Sufferers also doesn’t know about it? We took advantage of this place to hide from the Sufferers.*

Tuntun said as he indicated to 30 octopuses. They were the octopuses that had gone missing from the prohibited area. However, there weren’t just octopuses in this hiding spot. A translucent shiny mass shaped like a slime was a NPC? A monster? Anyway, those things were running around this place.

“What is that?”

*–Is this the first time you’ve seen it? It is a life form called the Mumu. They*

*are a primeval being living on different planets in the galaxy for millions of years. But they have almost no intelligence.*

Tuntun was a surprisingly well informed octopus.

“Why are they here?”

*–It has a habit of going around and eating whatever is on the ground. So Java decided to catch a few of them. Anyplace that they move over will become clean. They are a substitution for robot cleaners. Well, it is no different from us being turned into exclusive pipe cleaners. Those guys received the same treatment.....anyway, their circumstances were similar so they also moved to this hidden spot. We tried but we only managed to save 3. Originally there were 100 of them but they were caught by the Sufferers.*

A slime like alien life. It was abrupt but there really were many types of guys out there. While Ark was looking at the Mumu strangely, some octopuses approached and asked.

*–Tuntun hyung-nim, who did you come with?*

*–I’ll explain later. Where is that guy?*

*–That guy? Do you mean Jay?*

*–I saw Jay around that corner just now.....*

Ark stared at the place that the octopus indicated.

“Is the useful person that Mumu?”

The octopus had pointed towards a huge Mumu in the corner.

*–Not that!*

Tuntun suddenly yelled and ran up to the huge Mumu.

*–This guy again! Shoo! Shoo! Go away! This guy isn’t for you to eat!*

The octopus kicked out and the Mumu immediately moved to the side. Then a man was shown. The man wore a white robe and couldn’t stop

trembling. Tuntun slapped his cheeks and shouted.

*–Hey! Wake up! Gather your spirit!*

“Ohhh.....”

The man painfully lifted his eyelids. The eyes looked around idly before staring with surprise at Tuntun.

“W-who? Tuntun? Why.....?”

*–It’s me. You were almost eaten by the Mumu just now.*

“Hu.... I’m a goner..... I can’t lift a finger anymore..... Then I don’t mind being eaten by another life form..... Yes.....I won’t die..... I’ll be born anew in another life form.....huhuhu.”

*–Stop talking nonsense and wake up! The person you’re waiting for has come!*

“I-I.....person? Who?”

The man raised his body and looked around restlessly. Then he ran up to Ark and shook his shoulder.

“Food! Do you have something to eat? This is a request! It doesn’t matter if it is fermented soybean paste as long as I can put it in my mouth!”

He was puzzled when the man suddenly ran up but now Ark could understand almost all the circumstances. Tuntun and the Charenjok could avoid the Sufferers in the pipes but it wasn’t a good situation. This wasn’t simply because they were confined. The Charenjok could navigate through the pipes in order to gather food. If they travelled through the control tower then they could obtain 3~4 food a day. It needed to be split between 30 octopuses so of course they would starve. In fact Tuntun was looking for food on the 4th floor when he discovered Ark. But the Charenjok was a species surprisingly good at fuel efficiency. Their satiety fell at a much lower rate compared to other species. In comparison, Jay’s satiety fell quickly and he

was in a critical condition and lost all of his spirit. But Ark didn't exactly have food. While the Phoenix members possessed abundant supplies, Ark wanted to raise the proficiency of Steel Stomach so he only stocked fish in his bag.

“If you don't mind something like this.....”

Ark pulled out a Bellos' egg.

“Ah! F-food! I'm going to eat! Ohhhh!”

Jay snatched the egg and swallowed it. And.....

“Phew, I'm alive! But what type of egg is this? Was this egg bio-engineered to be huge? Some planets.....ugh! T-this....all of a sudden.....huh? Did I eat the egg of a Bellos? Ahuk! T-then.....ik! Ik! I-it is coming out! Ack! P-please excuse me for a moment. P-please.....ugh! No more!”

Ark quickly retreated. He had already guessed what would happen. Ark and the Charenjok all turned their heads away! Once again, most of the ingredients in the Outlands were toxic so they caused stomach pain, vomiting, diarrhoea etc. Ark wasn't affected thanks to Steel Stomach but to the NPC it was like drinking expired milk! Ark would only get a stomach ache but the NPC.....

Bujik! Bujik! Bujjik!

It was an embarrassing scene that was hard to describe. Although it was better to be embarrassed than to starve and die.

“Phew, I'm sorry to show you a sight like that. Anyway, I'm alive thanks to you.”

Jay smiled awkwardly and lifted his pants.

“By the way, I didn't think I would see a person here. Are you part of the rescue team sent by Java?”

“It was a rescue team but.....”

Ark ignored the pile of X in the corner and explained the circumstances. The expectations on Jay's face changed to despair.

“All of the squad members are dead?”

“Probably.....”

“Phoenix.....I've heard of them. They are a multinational mercenary unit hired by Java. I heard that their skills are the best among the Charem guards.....if even the Phoenix members died.....it is the end. Dammit, do I have no choice but to die here? Ohh!”

Jay looked around with a hopeless expression.

“But I haven't given up yet.”

Ark replied in a firm voice.

“If I manage to retake the management system at the top then the problem of Charem will be solved. Fortunately Tuntun knows the complete structure of the pipes in the control tower. But Tuntun only knows up to the 39th floor. And I heard there are a lot of security devices that are hard to bypass without a special security card. Like I said, I don't have contact with Kalbern who possesses the special security card anymore. Tuntun told me that you could help with this matter.”

“Ah, that's right!”

Jay suddenly raised his head at Ark's words. He raised his body with a determined expression and replied in a calm voice.

“Yes. In fact I am the supervisor of the research institute in Charem!”

Tutudung!

Jay's identity was becoming clear! Just now he had placed the X in the corner and.....Jay belatedly realized it and tried to make some excuses.

“No.....I'm not always like this. I'm full of intelligence.....I'm a person who

leads with my charisma. W-what's with those eyes? You don't believe it? What is that? It is true. I'm like an aristocrat when I'm in the laboratory. Tuntun, say something. Eek? Y-you don't believe me either? Y-yes. I'm not an aristocrat. But.....no, that's not it. It couldn't be helped. There was no toilet. I mean.....yes, I'm sorry. Please don't spread any rumours.”

But Ark had no interest in Jay's X or anything else. Ark was only concerned about how Jay could help with the quest.

“Can you help me?”

“Huh? Ah, yes. The top floor. Yes, you want to go to the top floor? I can help you with that problem. Like I said, I am Charem's head of research.”

Jay's laboratory was located on the 40th floor where the management system also was. When the biohazard occurred, Jay took refuge in the laboratory with the other researchers because it had high level security. They avoided the Sufferers thanks to the security but the researchers there starved to death. Once all the researchers starved to death, Jay finally tried a desperate escape attempt. He escaped using the elevator on the 39th floor that the Phoenix members used. Just before he was found by Sufferers, he was discovered by Tuntun and rescued.

“When an emergency situation occurs, all the passages on the top floor are automatically blocked off. So the Sufferers also can't enter the 40th floor. The problem is that an A level security card is required to release the security on that floor. Tuntun knows the safe route to the 39th floor and you only need to rise one more floor to the laboratory. There will be no difficulty heading to the management system from the laboratory.”

“Can you give me the security card?”

“Of course.”

‘There is hope!’

A light seemed to shine after Jay's answer. Jay then became confused after

looking through his pockets.

“Eh? Eh? Eh? W-where is it? I had it when I came here?”

*–What are you saying? You’ve lost the security card?*

Tuntun glared angrily and Jay shook his head with a pale face.

“Ah, no. That is impossible. I had it just now. Yes, it was clearly in my pocket when I fell asleep just then. It is obviously somewhere here.

Obviously....heok! I found it! Inside that guy! That guy ate it while I was sleeping!”

Jay shouted as he pointed to the Mumu. Just like Jay said, a rectangular object like a card floated in the transparent Mumu. Jay yanked his hair after seeing the card inside the Mumu.

“Ugh! No! That is plastic! It will melt!”

*–So stupid! Don’t you know how important that card is?*

Tuntun looked around desperately and shouted at the octopuses.

*–Catch that guy! If that card is damaged then it is all over! Make him spit it out!*

The octopuses had listened to their conversation so they knew how important this matter was. The octopuses all stampeded over to the Mumu after hearing Tuntun’s words. They turned the Mumu upside down and even kicked the stomach but the Mumu didn’t budge.

‘Dammit, this is.....’

Ark looked at the scene with amazement. He had finally seen a light of hope in the darkness only to discover that the key was inside the Mumu’s stomach. If this card was lost then he was screwed!

‘I have to make that guy vomit out the card no matter what!’

Ark was about to take out his sword. Then the pile of X caught his eye.

‘Yes, there is that method!’

“Please open the Mumu’s mouth!”

Ark shouted as he ran towards the Mumu. And the octopus pulled down one side of the Mumu’s mouth! Ark took out a Bellos’ egg from his bag and placed it in the mouth. This was the method he came up with after seeing Jay’s X! He made the Mumu eat the Bellos’ egg so that it would make X. But unlike Jay, the Mumu seemed to have no reaction to the egg.

‘Damn, is that guy’s stomach really sturdy? But let’s see how much it can take!’

Ark shoved the Bellos’ egg and fish in to the Mumu’s mouth. Soon the Mumu’s body swelled up like a balloon!

Bujajajak!

An absurd amount of X poured out. And.....

-You have acquired the <A class security card>

‘Damn, it is really messy.....’

Ark could finally obtain the security card. He didn’t want to explain exactly how he obtained the security guard. Let’s just say that it really was a dirty method. But this was a game! The X and Y were only graphics.....if he thought of it like that then he could endure it. Anyway, he managed to obtain the security card.

-You have acquired <Bullets (12) x 2>

-You have acquired <Armour Piercing Bullets (12) x 2>

-You have acquired <Low level mechanical parts x5>.....

Various miscellaneous things were mixed in the X along with the security card. The Mumu digested everything but it couldn't digest metal objects like bullets or machine parts. It was truly an economical NPC that could pick up metal to recycle it. After the trouble the Mumu probably went around the control tower and ate the items that the guards dropped.

'Then the other Mumu might also have items.'

Ark's eyes naturally turned towards the other 2 Mumu. Kalbern replenished his bullets every time a battle ended but there was a limit to how much he could obtain for free. The bullets were gone after it hit someone so there weren't a lot of bullets remaining. If the bullets completely disappeared before arriving at the management system then the combat power would be cut.

'Dirty.....it is dirty but.....'

Bullets were the lifeline on the battlefield! So he did that! Even though it was dirty!

Bujajajak! Bujajajak!

He fed the remaining 2 Mumu. He looked through the pile of mechanical parts in the X.

'Eh? This is.....?'

Something he hadn't considered was mixed in the X. The item in the pile of X.....

## Curse VS Curse

“Jackpot!”

Ark’s eyes shone as he exclaimed. Ark was standing in a place lined with cabinets. The reason Ark was in this storehouse.....he had to go back 3 hours.

-You have acquired the plumbing information about the central control tower from Tuntun.

<Your Nymphe has been updated with the plumbing information about the central control tower>

“Okay.”

Ark grinned and nodded. After gathering all the items from the Mumu’s X, he received a thorough education in the control tower’s plumbing information. Once the map of the central control tower was revealed, he discovered another route that didn’t involve the elevator on the 5th floor. It was a secret passage in plumbing of the central control tower.

*–Is it really okay to go by yourself?*

Tuntun wanted to accompany him but Ark respectfully declined. The octopuses didn’t have any combat power. So it was more convenient for Ark to act alone. Ark climbed into the pipe again after finishing everything in the octopuses’ lair. The pipe was so narrow that he had to crouch his body so that he could finally enter. But Ark was the supervisor of the pipe cleaning group on R-14.

Susak! Susak! Susak! Susak!

Ark crossed the pipe at a speed that wasn’t inferior to the octopuses.

‘I expected it but it really is no joke.’

When he looked through the gaps a lot of Sufferers caught his eye. He couldn't be relieved even if he was in the pipe. The Sufferers responded to sound. Every time there was a sound in the pipe the Sufferers would respond and scratch at the wall nearby. And they always looked around restlessly for 3~4 minutes. It made him freeze! He would lie like the dead inside the pipe and not move a finger.

'I can't be hasty. I don't know what will happen if the Sufferers discover I'm in the pipe.'

It took him 13 days to reach Charem. If he made a mistake because of his impatience then he would never get all that time back. The most imperative thing was to get to the management system on the 40th floor.....or at least that's what he thought.....

'I can't pretend I didn't see this even if it is an emergency!'

Ark looked at the key in his hands with shining eyes.

-<39F First Guard Battalion  
Armoury Key>

This was the item he found in the Mumu's X!

*-What? This brat, when did he pick up something like this?*

"Well I'm not familiar with it but the guard quarters and armoury is near the stairs that leads from the 39th floor to the 40th floor. This key should belong to the captain of the guards.....maybe he is in the shape of a Sufferer somewhere."

Tuntun and Jay both said. But those words didn't enter Ark's ear. Armoury.....so it was a weapons storehouse. Looking at the present situation, there was no way a lot of weapons would be piled up in the armoury. The guards must've taken the weapons when the Sufferers first attacked. But even in this situation. No, in this situation it was impossible for

the armoury to be empty.

‘A key obtained in this method wouldn’t just be decorative. This is a game. If I found the key in a place like this then it is impossible for the armoury to be empty.’

Ark’s guess was correct. He finally arrived at the 39th floor after 3 hours of crawling through the pipe. Because of security problems, there wasn’t a separate pipe on the 39th floor that reached the 40th floor. If he hadn’t found the key then he would’ve gone up to the 40th floor via the stairs immediately. But Ark submitted to the risk and searched around the stairs before discovering the armoury. In fact, he had been frustrated when he first entered the armoury. The cabinets that filled the room were open and empty. However there were still boxes piled up on one side filled with bullets! Right now bullets were one of his most important supplies! But Ark hadn’t come here for bullets.

‘No, I don’t know yet. Not all the guards would’ve realized and collected their weapons. There might be one weapon remaining.’

He thought like that and started searching the armoury for 10 minutes. He managed to find 2 items left in the gap between the cabinet and the floor.

-Fire Eagle P-40 (Magic)

Item Type: Shotgun (One handed, Two handed) Wearer Restriction:  
Level 65, all professions

Attack: 20~65 Firing Rate: 3.00 Sec

Durability: 80/80 Number of Ammunition: 5

The Fire Eagle P-40 is a shotgun designed to divide the bullet into 10 fragments. The splintered bullets would spread out to attack all enemies in front in a wide area attack. However, the splintering of the bullet means the damage won’t be as high. The range is 5 metres and the damage will

be extremely weak after that distance.

The Fire Eagle P-40 is a small firearm but it unleashes havoc in close combat. Try to hit the enemy's head from a close range. All the accumulated stress from the battle will be released.

<When using both hands success rate +30%, effect will be applied to all enemies within 5 metres>

-RPG PW-600 (Magic)

Item Type: Rocket Launcher (Two handed)

Wearer Restriction: Level 70, Heavy Armour affiliate

Attack: 200~350 Firing Rate: 10.50 Sec

Durability: 50/50 Number of Ammunition: 1

The rocket launcher is a personal firearm that boasts the strongest firepower. The PW-600 is an RPG that will show an effective performance, especially when used by the armed forces of the galactic federation. The RW-600 will deal 40% splash damage to all enemies within a 15 metre radius of the landing force and will inflict panic for 5 seconds.

Regular infantry with and heavily armoured troops will be like a paper doll in front of you. You who selected the PW-600! There is a possibility that you will become a hero of the battlefield!

<Has a half-homing function. Hit rate + 50%>

Shotgun and RPG! The shotgun and RPG were both weapons that belonged to the expensive category. The magic items were a minimum of 150 gold! He had found 2 such weapons. Although the RPG PW-600 couldn't be used because of the restriction on body coating, the Fire Eagle P-40 was

something he could use immediately! He also got the required shotgun bullets from the Mumu's X and the armoury. Searching through the Mumu's X was worth it.

“I was able to obtain 2 weapons and bullets from finding the key in the Mumu's X. I had felt gloomy when the Phoenix members died but luck has followed. No, that's not it.”

Ark shook his head.

“I can't lose my spirit in a place like this. The RPG and shotgun is an unexpected profit but not worth struggling for 13 days. My goal is the quest reward! And the quest completion is in sight. This is the time when I have to be the most careful. If I make a mistake then I'll be killed. One small mistake will undo all my efforts of the last 13 days. I can't relax until this quest is finished.”

It wasn't simply a matter of attitude. If Ark was an ordinary warrior then he couldn't help feeling too excited. However, Ark wasn't an ordinary warrior. He was a warrior focused on survival above anything else. And his survivor's ability needed 100% concentration!

“Stealth.”

Ark said as he took a deep breath. Then his skin gradually became invisible. The bending of light to make his body invisible was a Survival coating skill! Like Binding Sword and Mind Shield, Stealth was a skill that required concentration. Therefore composure was needed to ensure his survival.

Kuaaaaah!

The moment Ark opened the door of the armoury! The horribly distorted faces of Sufferers were all around him.

“Ugh!”

-Your concentration has been disturbed and stealth mode is released!

.....Ark's concentration didn't even last for 1 second. It was reasonable. Who would've expected that the Sufferers would be right in front of the armoury? But even in this bad situation, he was Ark!

“Dammit, take this! Fire Eagle P-40!”

Ark quickly took out the shotgun and fired.

Pepepeng-!

Flames started spewing out! The muzzle placed against the Sufferer's chest exploded and threw it into the wall.

‘T-this is more than I thought.....’

Ark eyed the Fire Eagle. He thought it was quite a good gun when he read the information widow. But he only discovered the real value after using the weapon. And the result was beyond imagination. The Sufferers health only decreased by 10% when he got a head shot but the Sufferer lost 20% when hit by the shotgun. Just like the information window said, it felt like all his stress was flying away! In fact, it was the inevitable result. Fading Steel was a level 20 weapon and despite Impact Blade being a unique weapon, it was still only level 30. But the Fire Eagle was a level 65 firearm. It was also a weapon that maximized damage in close range. The damage of Fading Steel and the Impact Blade couldn't be compared to the shotgun. As expected, the basic requirement in RPG games was equipment! This scene just confirmed that truth. Ark handled the shotgun with a happy smile.

Kieeeeeeeek!

Now wasn't the time for this. Other Sufferers had shrieked and gathered after hearing the sound of gunfire. Including the Sufferer slammed into the wall, there were now 4 of them rushing at a tremendous speed.

‘I can win against 4 of them with the Fire Eagle but.....’

The central control tower was infested with Sufferers. He didn’t realize the extent when moving with the Phoenix members but it was obvious when crawling through the pipes. In other words, it was like he had been left stranded in the middle of a herd of Sufferers. More Sufferers would eventually come.

‘I can’t fight blindly in a place like this. Fortunately I’m right next to the stairs going up to the 40th floor. And Jay’s lab is not far from the stairs. Jay previously managed to escape from the Sufferers by hiding in his lab. If I enter the lab then I can escape the Sufferers’ pursuit!’

Ark’s body automatically moved after he had the thought. Ark ran like lightning through the Sufferers while pulling the trigger. 10 pieces of the bullet exploded all over the place. It wasn’t concentrated on one place but the damage was enough to make the Sufferers flinch. Ark ran towards the stairs with all his power.

“Dammit!”

Ark’s guess was correct. 4 Sufferers were running down the stairs when he turned the corner. One of them discovered Ark and ran up to him.

Pepepepeng!

The Sufferer was hit by the bullet and blown away.

‘Considering the distance and power of the shotgun, that should’ve done 40% damage. But there is no meaning in defeating just one. Right now it is imperative to reach the lab. I have to save my bullets. The shotgun also takes a long time to reload. It will be the end if the bullets run out!’

Then a Sufferer swung its claws at him.

‘There is no time to avoid it!’

“Mind Shield!”

Ark triggered the Mind Shield and placed his muzzle to its stomach. Once again the Sufferer flew back several metres after he pulled the trigger. Ark grabbed the railing of the stairs and jumped up.

Woooooo!

There was a weird sound as he entered the 40th floor. It was the voices of the Sufferers running through the dark hallways towards him. But Ark wasn't interested in them anymore.

'The second hallway on the left!'

Jay had told him the layout of the 40th floor. No, he only drew the route to the laboratory. He turned his body and ran in that direction when there was a gunfire and sparks hit the wall and floor. Blocking the passage was a Sufferer holding a rifle that had probably been a guard from the 40th floor. But that didn't stop Ark. The narrow corridor made it hard to avoid the bullets and there were 10 Sufferers behind him.

'If I stop then I'll die!'

"Shield!"

A blue shield rose from his wrist. It was Bhurad's shield that he hadn't used in a while. Bhurad's shield blocked the bullets aiming for his head and chest as Ark rushed forward. Sparks rose and the level 10 shield broke after a few seconds. And even the Mind Shield with 250 durability broke from the Sufferer's attack. He lost a huge amount of health in an instant.

'Just a little more! A little more! A bit more! Now!'

"Damn, eat this!"

Ark cursed and grabbed a grenade. He pulled out the safety pin and threw it with all his strength.

Kwa kwa kwa kwang!

There was a roar and the Sufferer flew in every direction. Ark wasn't entirely

safe. He was caught in the explosion and lost 10% health while flying back a little bit. But that was Ark's intent. The moment the blast occurred, Ark rolled up from the ground and fired the machine gun. Of course that wasn't all.

Pepepepeng!

It grazed them from groin to chest. The Sufferer was tossed to the ceiling while its crotch became ragged. When the Sufferer aimed its gun at him, Ark smiled pleasantly and dropped to the ground. The bullets collided with the Sufferers chasing him.

“Nice!”

Ark cheered as the Sufferers fell like bowling pins. And a close metal door caught his eye when he turned around. It was the laboratory Jay mentioned. Ark immediately swiped the security card at the terminal next to the door. Then a message flashed on the screen of the terminal.

-The security card has been confirmed.

The administrator privileges is being authenticated.....

“Dammit! Is this a 486 computer? Work quicker!”

Ark tapped his foot and exclaimed. The Sufferers were regrouping.

“Damn it! This is the last.....”

Ark turned and lifted the Fire Eagle. At the same time the door of the lab opened. Ark pulled the trigger as the front Sufferers were hit and then ran into the lab. And the Sufferer at the rear lifted a machine gun! Ark pressed the switch for the door.

Pushu-!

-Operation of the door lock has been confirmed. It is locked.

“Pant pant pant, pant pant pant.”

Ark leaned against the door and gasped. There was the sound of the Sufferers firing and clawing at the door but it was no use. The lab that Ark entered was protected by an A class security device. It was made with several layers of steel and superalloys so not even C-6 or RPGs would break it.....that’s what Jay said.

‘That was close.’

When he checked he only had 30% health left. He had lost 70% health even when using Mind Shield and Bhurad’s shield. If it hadn’t been for the shield then he would’ve been eaten by the Sufferers.

‘Anyway, now I can be relieved. I still need to get to the management system but for now I can catch my breath.’

Ark manipulated his Nymphe after taking a rest.

“Phew Jay-nim, I’ve just arrived at the lab.”

*–I-is that true?*

Jay’s glad voice came from the Nymphe. Before leaving the Charenjok’s shelter, Ark had exchanged recognition codes with Jay. He had heard about the structure of the 39th and 40th floors but there were too many variables he couldn’t understand.

*–I honestly didn’t expect much but you’re amazing!*

He didn’t expect much? Then Jay thought he was going to die?

*–Anyway, now you are 90% successful. If you go exit the door on the other side then it is the control room with the management system. Usually there are no people in the control room. The security devices are all operated*

*automatically. So there shouldn't be any Sufferers in that area. If you use the security card I gave you then everything should be okay. He gave.....*

That was so condescending.

'It's true that I managed to reach here thanks to Jay's security card. Anyway, Jay said there should be no Sufferers near the control room but I can't just walk there blindly. I only have one life. So I need to be careful. I only have 2 recovery ampoules remaining.'

Ark reloaded the Fire Eagle and looked around. There were various monitors all over the place and it was divided into several areas with partitions. And bodies were scattered all over the place. The researchers had starved and died when they were locked inside the lab to escape the Sufferers. Ark decided to snoop around the lab.

'Eh? What is that?'

A large rock was placed in a circular space in the centre of the lab. It was oval shaped like an egg and approximately 3 metres in size. It was an opaque, black rock with something that looked like ice or crystal on it. Various types of devices to study the rock were attached to it.

"What is that?"

*–What? What did you say?*

"A rock that looks like the egg in the centre of the lab."

*–A rock that looks like an egg? Ah, that. I don't understand it well either. It was something that Java purchased before this situation occurred. I heard it was a meteorite that fell on some planet. But doesn't there appear to be something in the rock? There are letters carved on the surface of the rock. It is clearly not an ordinary meteorite. So it was moved to the lab to be examined. Please don't touch it. It is expensive.*

'Letters carved on the surface?'

Ark tilted his head and approached the rock. He couldn't see it from the front but the angle of light changed when he approached. Embossed characters could be seen on the surface. Ark narrowed his eyes and looked at the characters without specifically thinking anything.

'T-this is.....?'

Ark had seen those characters inscribed on the rock before. He had seen these bizarre shapes in the pyramid underneath Beltana. And it was carved on the slab that the treasure hunter Milan found. It was the Murat letters!

'There's no doubt about it. This is the Murat letters! Then?'

Ark placed his fingers on the characters with an expectant expression. The Nympe's automatic translation function started working and the message appeared.

*I am Osiris, the master of eternal life.*

*The day of ruin passed many months ago.....I left searching for the legacy of the great gods in order to resurrect the species but I couldn't accomplish it and went to sleep. You who have inherited the will of the Murat shall awaken me with the purest light.*

*This is a warning for those who disturb my sleep without the will of the Murat. Everybody that is vain and greedy will be struck with Osiris' curse.*

'Murat! It really is the Murat!'

Ark's heart thumped wildly. He had put of the Murat slab discovered by Milan to find Charem. But who knew he would discover another Murat relic in Charem? He had thought it was a jackpot when he discovered the shotgun and RPG in the armoury.

'This is different from the slab that Milan found. It is apparent that the Murat left something based on the phrase recorded. The relic wouldn't be left behind for no reason. There must be something.'

Ark couldn't just leave something like this alone. No, he wouldn't get another chance to obtain it after this one.

'The Sufferers are currently infesting the tower so this is my only chance. If the problem is settled then the control tower will return to Java's possession. No, I wouldn't even be allowed into the lab. So now's the only chance. This is the only time to get the meteorite!'

But there was a part that weighed on his mind. The meteorite was different from the RPG and shotgun he found. Ark was the only person currently in the lab. If the control tower was taken back and the meteorite missing then it was obviously that Ark was behind it. It would be troublesome if Java discovered that he broke the meteorite and took the contents inside.

'That can't happen. I need to clean this up.'

Ark thought for a while before saying.

"But why is this thing broken? Did you do that?"

*–Broken? Such a thing? It was perfectly fine when I escaped from the lab. The lab was also closed so the Sufferers also won't be able to enter.*

"I don't know either."

*–Damn, there was still a lot I wanted to learn.*

The method Ark came up with was saying 'I don't know. It was already like that.' If Ark said this then Jay had no choice but to believe it. Even if a problem occurred later on, he could use Jay as a witness to insist on his innocence. This was the real value for Ark!

'Now shall I see what I can get?'

Ark laughed and used his Fire Eagle. However, Ark was so engrossed with setting up an alibi that he forgot about something. The very last part of the phrase carved on the surface of the meteorite was 'curse.' In the past he was blinded by the items in the pyramid and fell into a trap.....He was so excited

by the opportunity that he completely forgot about it. Ark was reminded of those memories shortly after pulling the trigger.

“Set Bullets Shooting!”

Cheolkeok, cheolkeok, cheolkeok! Pepepeng!

The Fire Eagle spouted tremendous fire power. It was the shotgun that blew the Sufferers back several metres! Ark believed that the rock wouldn't be able to endure it. However the meteorite didn't even have one scratch on it.

“What? No matter how hard it is, to not even get one scratch.....”

Suddenly the meteorite turned red hot and a thunderous voice was heard in his head.

*–You have interfered with my sleep without permission! You shall suffer Osiris' curse!*

“C-curse?”

Ark flinched and retreated. He really couldn't imagine what happened next. Dozens of light shot up from the meteorite and a blurry object appeared. At first it was a circular object until metal legs emerged and formed a spider! It was the spider that crawled out of the Sufferer's stomach when it died and carried the zombie virus.

“S-spider? Why all of a sudden?”

Ark burst out with confusion and retreated. The group of spiders that emerged from the light quickly stampeded towards Ark.

-7  
damage!

-12  
damage!

-9  
damage....

.

The messages continuously rose in front of him. It only did a maximum of 10 damage. But the 10 spiders bit and clawed at him and he quickly lost 300 health. Ark also penetrated through a dozen Sufferers when rushing to the lab so he only had 30% health left. His health had recovered thanks to a short rest but it managed to go below 50% in 1 minute. He didn't have time to think about why the spiders appeared.

“Holy shit! N-no!”

Ark suddenly screamed and rolled on the ground. And shot the Fire Eagle at the spiders.

Pepepepeng!

Fortunately the spiders didn't have a lot of health. Half a dozen spiders melted from the splintered shots.

“Okay. Even if there are dozens.....”

Ujik! Ujik! Ujik! Kwadududuk!

Ark stood up and lifted the Fire Eagle. Then he heard the sound of bone breaking. Ark turned his head and reflexively stiffened. A researcher's body sitting in a chair started spasming. It was an instant change. The skin started dried out like a mummy and the sound of the bones breaking was the limbs extending.

“Sufferer!”

Ark realized what was happening. The spider was infecting the corpse with the Sufferer virus.

“Oh my god! All the corpses here.....”

Ark belatedly realized the situation and looked around desperately. There were 15 bodies in the lab! In other words, the spiders could create 15 Sufferers inside the lab. That was more than the number outside the lab. If that happened then he would totally lose!

Kieeeeeeeek!

At that time the mutation into a Sufferer finished. Ark hurriedly pulled out his dagger and drove it into the Sufferer's mouth. When the Sufferer fell to the ground, Ark placed the muzzle of his gun against the stomach and pulled the trigger.

Pepepepeng!

The Sufferer flew away and grabbed his stomach. But Ark had no time to worry about that Sufferer. There was a bunch of spiders that hadn't mutated into Sufferers yet. He was more worried about them changing into Sufferers. The spiders were gathering around the researchers' corpses.

'It is the end if they all change into Sufferers!'

However, there were still dozens of spiders left. Except for the spiders attached to Ark, others were hidden in hard to get areas like under the desk, in niches and partitions.

Ujik! Ujik! Ujik! Kwadududuk!

Meanwhile another corpse was moving.

'I made a mistake! There is no way to stop the spiders that have already scattered! I can't take care of 15 Sufferers even if I wear the battle suit! The only way is to burn the corpses with the flamethrower.....'

Ark suddenly raised his head.

'Wait a minute, corpses? Yes, the corpses! If I get rid of the corpses then I can stop the spiders! And the flamethrower isn't the only way to get rid of a corpse!'

“Come out! Armour armament!”

Ark jumped up and shouted. At that moment there was a storm and all the spiders attached to him flew off. The space warped and a black, insect like armour appeared. Ark was then covered with the armour. It was his battle suit Hyper Drone that increased all stats by 30%! But Ark had a reason other than the boost in stats to summon the Hyper Drone.

“Come out, Shire! Rune Carving, Ikram!”

Ark’s hand drew a complex character in the light. It was the Ikram rune he learnt in the pyramid! Then a hazy shape that looked like the ghost of Anubis appeared in the air. The dog’s head was then sucked into the researcher’s body. Then the researcher’s body started shaking like it was about to explode. And a dog with the head of a person emerged! It was the Hell hound.

“That’s it! It was successful!”

This was the method Ark devised!

“If the corpses are a problem then I should change it into Hell hounds!”

Then the Sufferer that received the shotgun bullet to its stomach came running. But Ark had no interest in the Sufferer anymore. He could see the spiders spreading out behind the Sufferer’s body. Ark was only interested in the Sufferer’s body.

“Those damn spiders, take this!”

Pepepepeng!

Ark fired towards the swarm of spiders around the corpses. While the spiders scattered, he avoided the Sufferer’s attacks and carved a rune in the air.

“Come out, Shire! Rune Carving, Ikram!”

Pepeng!

A new Hell hound was created. However, he couldn’t take the counterattack

of the spiders lightly. While the Hell hound was being created, a corpse on the other side started being turned into a Sufferer. Ark blindly fired at the spiders and shouted.

“Dammit, Hell hound! What are you standing around looking stupid for? Spider! Attack the spiders that are devouring the offerings to Anubis! Don’t just stand there watching! Stupid! Why aren’t you catching those spiders? Catch the ones approaching the corpses! Run!”

The 2 Hell hounds Ark created ran across the laboratory at Ark’s command. The abilities of the Hell hounds depended on the body that was sacrificed. The corpses that Ark offered were researchers. Their stats would be trivial. But they were still better than the spiders that had been hit by the Fire Eagle.

Grrrr! Bark! Bark! Bark! Bark!

They might be weaker than people but the cat was better at catching mice. The Hell hound was the same. It would be difficult to catch the spiders if they were hiding underneath the desks and partitions. However, the spiders were desperate to dig into the corpses to transform them into Sufferers. Ark also wasn’t idle.

“Ikram! Ikram! Ikram!”

He rolled around wielding his dagger and Fire Eagle while turning the bodies into Hell hounds. And he ordered the new Hell hounds that emerged to attack the spiders. The Hell hounds chased after the spiders and the Sufferers ran after Ark. Meanwhile he ran around transforming bodies into Hell hounds and attacking the Sufferers.....

‘It’s up to here!’

Ark gasped and raised his head.

-Hyper Drone’s remaining

mana: 22%

The battle suit's mana lasted for 30 minutes but he ran away using Rune Carving and the mana decreased to 22% in just 2 minutes.

‘But.....’

Ark had managed to use Ikram 7 times! There were 7 Hell hounds running around in the laboratory. Those 7 Hell hounds ran around and caused the spiders to emit smoke before melting. While the Hell hounds were running around, 5 Sufferers managed to be successfully created. There were still a few corpses but no more spiders.

‘This should be enough!’

Ark stopped using Rune Carving. There was 22% mana left before the battle suit would be recalled. The Hell hounds would also disappear. The Sufferers weren't increasing anymore so there was no reason to keep them around. But Ark could use the bonus stats and Hell hounds when fighting against the Sufferer.

Pushu-!

-You have used the recovery ampoule loaded on the Nympe.

<Your health has been restored by 500>

“Now let's stick!”

Bbok bbok bbok bbok! Bbok bbok bbok bbok

-You have recovered 2 health.

-You have recovered 2 health.....

He used the recovery ampoule! The token was placed on his head! At the same time Ark turned and fired at the Sufferers. The 5 Sufferers pushed aside the desks and chairs and rushed at Ark.

“Sonic Sword!”

The dagger broke through the speed of sound and caused a shock wave. Ark pushed back the first Sufferer and exclaimed.

“Hell hounds! Stop those guys in the back!”

Bark! Bark! Bark! Bark! Kaekang!

As expected, the Hell hounds created from the bodies of the Sufferers were extremely weak. They seemed incredibly strong when hunting the spiders but were nothing against the Sufferers. One attack would decrease their health by 20%. But he didn't expect a lot anyway. Ark just wanted to disperse the focus of their attacks. The Hell hounds persistently bit onto their legs despite being kicked. The 7 Hell hounds are tied up 2 Sufferers! It was good enough.

“Set Bullets Shooting!”

Cheolkeok, cheolkeok, cheolkeok! Pepepeng!

The projectiles shot out by the Fire Eagle exploded instantly. The shotgun caused 20% damage to three Sufferers! Meanwhile the one shot directly in the chest received 50% damage and flew back 10 metres. The claws of the Sufferers attacked from the left and right. But Ark ducked down and the claws just swiped through the air. The Sonic Sword then hit the Sufferer's ankle, causing it to collapse. Ark then aimed at the head of the Sufferer.

Cheolkeok, cheolkeok, cheolkeok! Pepepeng!

-Headshot!

<You have inflicted a serious blow and the enemy will receive additional 150% damage>

The head of the Sufferer blew up like a watermelon and it collapsed. This wasn't the first Sufferer Ark killed since entering the contaminated area. He joined the Phoenix squad and gained 4 levels travelling through the city and he was level 72 after entering the central control tower. But his growth wasn't simply in the levels. His experience of fighting against the Sufferers was ingrained into his body. His movements were completely different from the first time he met the Sufferers. He also inadvertently obtained the Fire Eagle! Kakak! Kakaka! Pepepeng!

Ark relentlessly attacked the possessed Sufferers. His sword split apart bone and flesh while the Fire Eagle's bullets lodged into the Sufferer. He was indeed in a trance! Meanwhile the cool down time of Mind Shield was over so Ark triggered it and didn't receive that much damage. After approximately 3 minutes.

Cheolkong! Pushu!

The casings fell from the Fire Eagle's cylinder. The casings fell among the scattered remains of the Sufferers on the ground.

'There's 2 left!'

Ark reloaded the bullets and started moving. 5 Hell hounds had died when he looked at the remaining 2 Sufferers. However the Sufferers weren't completely okay. The Hell hounds hadn't stopped biting and the Sufferers' ankles were so worn that bone could be seen. Just like the Hell hounds, the Sufferer's ability also depended on the body it mutated from. Moreover, this Sufferers were just created so they were extremely weak from the ones Ark normally faced. Ark could also easily take down 3 even if they were the

strong ones.

“Hell hounds. That’s enough. If any spiders emerge from these guys then kill them straight away! I’ll take care of those fellows!”

Kong kong kong! Kong kong kong!

Ark called off the Hell hounds and wielded his sword and gun. The Sufferer’s health had decreased by 20% while taking care of the 5 Hell hounds. But the ankles meant that their movements were decreased. Their health was reduced by 30~40% after the focused attacks. And Ark wasn’t an opponent easily stopped by the Sufferers.

-The Hyper Drone’s mana has been exhausted.

<The Hyper Drone will be recalled to its dimension and it can’t be summoned for another 10 hours>

The mana consumption of summoning so many Hell hounds meant the battle suit was recalled quicker. Ark didn’t pay any attention and continued attacking the Sufferers.

Kieeeeeeeek!

The battle ended with a final cry of distress. The Hell hounds meant to be killing the spiders had also disappeared with the battle suit so Ark took care of them. Finally the spiders, Sufferers and Hell hounds disappeared and Ark was the only one left in the lab.

“Pant pant pant! Now I understand what is going on. It is obvious what happened in Charem.”

Ark breathed harshly as he looked at the meteorite. The Sufferers had suddenly appeared one month ago. When he first heard Kalbern’s words he thought nothing of it. But there was a reason for it. It was a game but there was a reason for the unidentified biohazard. The curse on the meteorite was

produce the spiders as soon as it was hit!

“This isn’t a biohazard. It is a curse. Just like Anubis was in charge of the pyramid, the Osiris created the curse that made the Sufferers. Jay didn’t know that and someone hit the meteorite as an experiment.”

Clearly it spread because of that. And spiders appeared and all the people inside the lab became Sufferers. The Sufferers left the lab and attacked the guards that tried to stop them.....

The situation repeated several times until the control tower and the surrounding area in the city became contaminated with Sufferers.

“This is the first generation of Sufferers. It is the cause of the Sufferers. Jay and the researchers who died in here were unaware that this was the cause of all the damage. And I just invoked the curse again. If it wasn’t for the Ikram rune then I would be dead.”

The Ikram was a rune that offered up bodies to summon a Hell hound. It was similar to the process of creating a Sufferer. Well they were both techniques of the Murat so they would be similar but.....in the end he managed to survive against a curse using another curse.

“Okay what now? There is no doubt that is a relic from the Murat. But it didn’t receive one scratch from the Fire Eagle and it also caused a curse. In other words, there must be a separate way to unseal it.....if I go to the management system then there was no doubt I can solve Charem’s problem. However I can’t carry the whole thing.....”

While Ark was busy thinking.....

Ku ku ku ku! Ku ku ku ku! Ku ku ku ku!

Suddenly the meteorite vibrated and shattered? He struggled so hard to find out how to crack it but it was suddenly resolved? Then Ark heard a voice in his head while he was staring with a dumb expression.

*–The pure light has released the seal. You, take up the Murat’s will!*

“Eh? The pure light? It was definitely recorded that pure light could wake up the meteorite but.....wait? That reminds me.....the Shire! That’s right, the Shire is a technique originally used by the Murat. And the Shire was a photon organism. The pure light must be referring to the Murat’s Shire. Oh my god, I had the method to unseal the meteorite all along?”

There was no reason for him to go through all that trouble in the first place. But that was the result. If it wasn’t for Osiris’ curse then Ark would still be yanking at his head. The process might not be smooth but at least the seal was released! And the thing that appeared in the meteorite was a mummy! The mummy was dressed like a Pharaoh while holding a small pyramid in its hands. The only difference from the small pyramid found underneath Beltana was the colour.

“This pyramid is obviously.....”

The moment Ark touched the pyramid! Light shot up from the vertex of the pyramid and a video appeared.

‘Indeed! This is the same reaction as the small pyramid underneath Beltana!’

The 3D video that appeared in thin air.....

7 people wearing pharaoh clothes were standing in a place that looked like a spaceship and staring outside. A large fireball was falling outside the spaceship. It was a huge fireball that seemed like it was going to swallow the planet! A man looked at the fireball and sighed before muttering. He couldn’t understand it but the conversation seemed to be about the fireball. After a brief moment, the man pulled out a small, gold pyramid. The remaining 6 people also took out small pyramids. They simultaneously lifted it over their head and a huge light shot out. And hundreds, thousands.....the incalculable number of lights flew towards the fireball.

‘W-what is that? 7.....there were originally 7of these pyramids? And that

light? It was created after the pyramids were gathered.....this pyramid isn't the same as the one I received before? Is there a hidden secret within the pyramids?'

The pyramid that he had accidentally found on Beltana was still hiding something! As seen from the video, something great would occur if all 7 pyramids were gathered. Ark's heart felt unsteady when he discovered this. But he still didn't know what was going on. That's because the video ended with the explosion of the light.

The new image showed a man dressed in pharaoh's clothes inside a small, capsule like spacecraft and flying somewhere. He was holding the brown pyramid that Ark had right now. Endless.....endless.....endless.....he flew for so long that his skin changed to that of a mummy. And the man finally realized it was the end for him. He opened the bottom of the pyramid and put his hand in, filling it with light. His eyes closed and he hardened to stone. It was the rock that had broken just now.

-You have acquired undisclosed information about the ancient alien species called the Murat.

The universe has a long history and many alien civilizations have grown and declined. Finding undisclosed information can help illuminate the history of the universe. Hidden alien artefacts or technology can play a decisive role.

+ Information about the ancient alien species Murat (2/15).

+ You have obtained 300 Adventure points for acquiring information about the Murat.

+ You have gained 5 Intelligence for acquiring information about the Murat.

The image disappeared and the information window popped up. He gained

bonus adventure points and intelligence like the previous time. But disappointment spread on Ark's face.

“Damn, I was full of expectations but it was just a clue to secrets hidden within the pyramids? It is no different from throwing bait while fishing only to pull up some rice. No, the mummy turned into a meteorite in the second video.....perhaps he was also looking for the pyramids? That reminds me, on the meteorite it was recorded that the mummy was searching for the legacy of the gods. Then maybe there was some incident where the Murat lost the pyramids and the mummy was searching for it when he died of old age.....is it somehow related to the video form Beltana?”

Ark frowned and muttered. Then the mummy turned into dust and glittering objects fell onto the ground.

-Sheraton's Dawn (Rare)

Item Type: Necklace Wearer Restriction: Level 100

A necklace belong to the Murat, an ancient alien species that was destroyed a long time ago.

The purple gemstone inserted in the pendant of the necklace emits a mysterious light. This gem disappeared a long time ago but it had a stabilizing effect and was nicknames the 'light of intelligence.' The ancient Murat respects wisdom above everything else and decorated various accessories with it. The gemstone placed in the Sheraton's Dawn is a size that is hard to process.

<Intelligence +45, Mana Regeneration +30%>

“T-this.....!”

Ark's mouth dropped open as he lifted the necklace. Jewellery was more expensive than weapons when traded in Galaxian! And this was a rare jewellery. But Ark's mouth wasn't wide open because it was good.

“Ugh! Why is it mana instead of mental power?”

And the option was mana recovery +30%! Ark was increasingly using skills that required mana in recent times so he was glad about that. But Ark’s normal skills didn’t use mana. No, he didn’t even have a gauge for mana in the first place. Of course, this was the first rare necklace he got and the +45 intelligence meant he could sell it to Espers for a high price. 45 intelligence was a great option. No, he should cheer at the 45 intelligence attached to it.

“It is still too early to be disappointed. Just like the mummy in Beltana, this pyramid was filled with light. That light is the Shire. If it is the same as before then it is a new rune. A new skill!”

Ark fiddled with the bottom of the pyramid when he stopped. If he died then the skill he learnt from the item would disappear. Even if he was within the vicinity, the management system hasn’t been recaptured yet. An unexpected situation where he could die might occur after learning the skill! I can’t waste the skill that I obtained through a weird incident.

“Yes, it isn’t necessary to learn the skill at this time. I can learn it after I settle Charem’s problem and register at the Fairy. It is fine until then.”

Ark placed the pyramid in his bag. Then he turned and looked at the metal door on the other side. If he exited that door then there was only several hundred metres left until the management system!

## Never-ending Quest

“W-what?”

Really.....it was outrageous. And.....it was fascinating. Just like Jay said, there were no Sufferers on the other side of the lab. There was only the control booth for the management system. The control room was the core facility for Charem so they were equipped with androids or turrets. Therefore a battle occurred between the security system and the Sufferers. When Ark exited the lab he saw the shattered bodies of the Sufferers and security system. Although there were one or two still surviving.....they already weren't a match for Ark.

Rururala susak susak! Pepepeng!

Ark comfortably destroyed the Sufferers and ran towards the control room. But this was the main place of his quest so he couldn't afford to relax. After a moment Ark flinched.

‘Wait? Whenever I think these types of thoughts.....’

It always happened. It was too easy. He was lucky. He didn't understand why but when that happened things would always twist in a strange way. This tradition went all the way back to when Ark was in New World.

‘This, perhaps.....it might be different. I came all the way up here.....’

But he was wrong. Ark used Jay's security card and entered the control room. Then Ark saw it. A thick iron wall blocking the various control devices! In fact Ark wasn't worried about it. There was terminal right in front of the iron wall and Ark possessed Jay's A class security card. He got an unlucky feeling when he swiped the security card on the terminal.

-Error! This security card isn't authorized the open

the current location!

Jay immediately explained the situation through the Nymphe.

*–Oh my god! This have become complicated.*

“Complicated? What do you mean? What is this iron door? You didn’t say anything about this!”

*–I didn’t think it would work like this. I’ve never saw it before but the management system will be surrounded by a wall when an enemy destroys the security device.*

“Then is there a way to release it?”

*–The only way to release it is to use the Lord of Charem, Java’s security card.*

“Java’s security card.....”

He had seen it. It was the top rated security card that could access all system in Charem. Kalbern was able to open the door of the control tower and proceed to the 5th floor because he had this security card. And Kalbern got on the direct elevator to the 39th floor with the security card. But they never arrived at the 39th floor. They were blindsided by a mysterious attack in the elevator. It was highly likely that Java’s security card was somewhere in the stomach of that creature. The Phoenix members were dangling from a vertical passage and weren’t able to fight properly. It had been a few hours since that happened so they might’ve been digested and emerged in the creature’s X. He didn’t want to fight the fearsome creature.....Did he have to search through 40 floors infested with Sufferers for the creature’s X?

‘In the end I have to search through all of the control tower? No way! How am I supposed to move around 40 floors by myself? There must be another way!’

Ark attempted to hack the terminal.

-This device is protected by a security device.

Enter the security code or use Invaders to hack and release the lock.

This lock has a security rating of level 30. Your present hacking techniques can only release level 1~3 locks.

<If you don't know the password then try against after raising the level of your hacking skill>

.....It was impossible.

“Damn! Is there any other way?”

*–I only know that you can disable it from the control room. If it can't be released.....it is made of a compressed metal and Orichalcum alloy so it can't be scratched with a normal bomb. Only the special bombs created with the banned 'TK technology' can scratch it.*

Bombs where TK technology was applied. Marquis Martin had handed him the STK-VII made with TK technology when he accepted the <Charem's Infiltration> quest. But he had used it all while hunting in the northern lake.

‘The grenade was needed in a place like this!’

Once again Ark realized that Galaxian was a RPG game. This was why he received the item in conjunction with the quest. In RPG games, items that played a decisive role in the quest were given. Ark completely forgot that common sense.

That wasn't all. If he was more flexible and coped better during the surprise attack in the elevator then he might've been able to grab Java's security card. Java's security card and the STK-VII were items necessary for the quest progress and he lost both of them. While Ark was busy thinking.....

*–Ah! There may be a way.*

“W-what is it?”

*–There is no way to release the lock or destroy the wall. But our purpose isn’t to recover the management system is it?*

“Huh? It isn’t to recover the management system?”

*–No, I mean you’re looking for the management system to turn off the shield around Charem. The system might not be recovered but it is simple to release the shield. Just turn of Charem’s power.*

“Power.....!”

*–Yes, the facilities for all of Charem’s power is in the basement. Charem’s shield also uses the power from these facilities. If we turn off the facility then the shield will be released. My security card will be able to release the basement door.*

“Again.....now I have to go down to the basement?”

*–That is the only way.*

Jay replied in a firm voice like there was no room for negotiation. He really was going around all over the place. He climbed all the way to the 40th floor and now he had to go down to the basement? Of course, except for the 40th floor it wasn’t that difficult to navigate thanks to the pipes. But he had to go down to the 39th floor in order to use the pipes. And there were 20 Sufferers gathered outside the laboratory. But he had no other choice. Java’s security card! The STK-VII that Marquis Martin gave him!

“Dammit!”

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Wiiii!

Loud sirens rang out. The flashing red lights attached to the wall, the rough footsteps and the shouts all indicated an emergency situation. Sometimes the

screams would mix with the gunshots. Inside a dark corridor.

‘Huhuhu, as expected. It was nicely accomplished!’

The black eyes shone as the guy smirked. Crouching in a corner was a hamster applying ash to his fur! It was Tori who was arrested for the museum break in and sent to the orbit prison Stael.

‘Those federation guys, did they think they could keep me locked up? What is this? I am Tori. Tori who used to run wild around the galaxy. If you thought this Tori would politely stay here for 2 years then you miscalculated. The plan took a bit longer than I expected but this is my expertise.’

Tori remembered the turbulent memories of the past few months.

*–The defendant Tori is sentenced to 2 years of labour in the orbit prison Stael!*

Everything started from that moment.

‘2 years? Don’t make me laugh! I just stole a few things and now I have to be stuck for 2 years? I am Jean Valjean? I can’t accept this! Those damn federation bastards! I definitely have to escape!’

Tori started to dream of a jailbreak after being imprisoned in Stael. But there was a weak point. He was forced to labour for 15 hours a day. Stael was a prison created on a satellite that used to be a battlefield between the federation and the Rama. The labour imposed on the inmates was to gather parts and equipment left behind by that war.

‘This is great!’

All the plans were completed in Tori’s head at that moment. Since then Tori slowly started to hide small metal parts. Of course he received a physical check from a guard after the labour finished but Tori was a hamster and could hide it in undetectable places. For example, in between his fur or his stomach.....he was thoroughly searched with a metal detector and X-ray

machine but Tori had ways of cheating those equipment.

“Eh? That bastard, why is his X-rays turning up black?”

“Why is the metal detector responding?”

“Ah, that? It might be this.”

Tori shook his body and iron powder fell from it.

“Hihihihhi, I have a lot of fur. The powder seems to have been caught in my fur while working.”

Of course he had intentionally stuck the iron powder to his body. It was natural for the metal detector to react when he was covered with iron powder. Even the X-rays turned out black. Tori’s greatest strength was his cunning.

‘A genius? Aren’t I a genius? Hihihihhi!’

Anyway, Tori gradually gathered small metal parts. And after a few months of gathering metal parts and joining them together.....

‘It is complete!’

Tori looked at a machine the size of a soccer ball. It was the machine Tori went without sleep for the past few months to create! It was a machine he named ‘Random hacking, sprinkle virus.’ The name was the same as the use. It was a machine that randomly hacked various systems and spread a virus.

‘Stael’s security is definitely no joke. This facility is completely isolated from the outside and there are hardly any gaps in security. But.....’

The external security was perfect but that meant internal security was lax. Furthermore, Tori’s Random Hacking machine was something he had been working on for several months. Of course, he didn’t have the right equipment so he didn’t have fine control over it but it was simple to plant a virus in the connected system. Tori hid the machine on him while waiting for an opportunity when the guards weren’t looking.

‘Random hacking, sprinkle virus’!

‘The chances of success was fifty-fifty but it worked better than expected!’

Tori looked around with sparkling eyes and laughed. Once he started the machine, there was an error in the locking mechanism and all the doors in Stael opened at once. He didn’t need to use his imagination to know what happened next.

“Ohhhh! The prison doors opened!”

“Those bastard guards, shall we bother them? I will show you this time!”

“It is a riot, a riot! Seize the central control tower! If they escape then they will threaten the galactic federation!”

“Hahahaha! Kill everybody!”

People who committed atrocities in Galaxian were also placed in Stael prison. The proof was that the prisoners rioted at once. The guards who couldn’t react to the sudden situation had their weapons taken away and the riot got out of hand. However Tori had no interest in the riot.

‘Those stupid guys, they’re just ignorantly fighting. Do they really think they can seize Stael just because they got their hands on some weapons? The federation army fleet will come as soon as Stael’s situation is conveyed. They will fire the guns. Do they want to drop dead? Well it doesn’t really matter to me. No, I’m actually thankful. This makes my escape easier. Yes, escape! Now I can escape from this hellish place!’

Tori raised his head with a hopeful expression. Hope dawned on Tori’s haggard face. He couldn’t eat his favourite sunflower seeds, his eyes were sunken in, he had bruises all over the place and he had lost some fur. This was a brutality committed by the Katz that shared his cell. Tori’s plan was also behind schedule because of the Katz. Those guys stepped on Tori and kicked him so he felt badly every night. So it was difficult to find time to make the machine.

‘But today is the end of this miserable life. Those guys are violent so they will run around violently and will be shot at. Hihihhi, that’s good.’

Tori laughed and shook his head.

‘No, that’s not it. Now’s not the time. There are also smart guys like me among the prisoners. I have to escape before it is too late!’

Tori ran along a passage. Tori was heading towards the space shutter hangar! The security there was strict but all the door mechanisms were currently jammed. And the guards were mobilized to stop the riot.

‘There are still a few guards remaining but.....’

Tori had applied some ash to his fur!

He would blend into the darkness to avoid catching the guard’s eyes and sneak away on a stolen shuttle! Tori’s hope swelled up and he quickly ran to the hangar.

“Huk! W-what is this?”

Tori stared around the hangar with confusion. There were 10 bodies scattered around the entrance of the hangar. They were the bodies of the guards.

“Don’t tell me? Some prisoners managed to reach the hangar in the meantime?”

Roaaaaar!

Then there was a tremendous roaring sound. Tori turned his head and flinched. The roaring came from a space shuttle inside the hangar. There was no doubt about it. While Tori was hiding to avoid being mixed up in the riot, some prisoners had attacked the guards in the hangar and seized a space shuttle. Of course there was still a lot of space shuttles left.....

“This way!”

“The prisoners are running away! Shoot!”

Tu tu tu tu! Tu tu tu tu! Tu tu tu tu!

Guards ran inside the hanger firing machine guns.

‘No! The guards are starting to flock to the hangar. I don’t have time to seize another space shuttle! If I don’t get on that space shuttle then I’ll be caught!’

He would go back to working during the day and being beaten up by the Katz at night. Tori would rather die than go back to a hell like that.

“Stop! Stop! Take me along as well! Wait a minute!”

“A prisoner hasn’t got on yet!”

“Shoot! Stop him even if you have to kill him!”

Tu tu tu tu! Tu tu tu tu! Tu tu tu tu!

Bullets were fired but that didn’t stop the hamster. Escape from hell!

Freedom! Sunflower seeds!

“Ohhhhhh! Freedom!”

He threw his body towards the space shuttle that was rising.

“He is a colleague too! Grab him!”

The shuttle door opened and someone grabbed Tori’s hand. The light of deliverance! Light of freedom! Tori tightened his grip on the hand and crept into the shuttle. Then the door closed and the space shuttle flew out of the hangar’s doors into space. The sight of Stael receding brought Tori to tears then he turned his head.

“Pant pant pant, thanks! Thank you! I’ll never forget that you saved me from hell! I am Tori! My saviours.....heok! Y-you are.....”

Tori suddenly screamed and retreated. The man smiled and nodded.

“You understand Tori. You are our friend.”

There were 10 people gathered in front of Tori. They were the Katz that he

shared a cell with.

“We seem closely connected. Let’s see what happens in the future. Nyang~.”

“.....Should I just jump out into space?”

Tori was seriously worried.

---

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“Damn, it was possible to do it this way!”

A curse naturally emerged. Ark had reached the management system on the 40th floor and now he had to go back down again. The thing he was most concerned about was the Sufferers outside his lab. But it was surprisingly easy to settle that problem. The doors of the laboratory!

-The administrator has been authenticated and the door will be opened.

The door opened.

Keeeeeeh!

-The administrator has been authenticated and the door will be closed.

The door would close as soon as three or four Sufferers ran through the door.

And susak susak! Pepepepeng!

By attacking a few Sufferers at a time with the sword and Fire Eagle, he could wipe out all the Sufferers in 30 minutes. The process meant he didn’t need to worry about dying. His worries were for nothing. Anyway, Ark took care of the Sufferers and exited the lab. He went down to the 39th floor and took the pipes ↓↓↓↓! He used Tori’s instructions and Jay over the Nymphe to climb down the pipes to the 20th floor to a door where a sign saying ‘Danger! Off limits except for administrators’ hung from it. It was a door that led to the

outer wall of the control tower!

“.....This is Charem!”

Ark muttered to himself. This was the place that Ark first saw using the Wire Camera when he entered the water facilities. It was crowded with aliens and was probably the safety zone that Kalbern mentioned. But the place Ark emerged in was the contaminated area. He immediately joined the Phoenix members and then he was stuck in the control tower. Therefore Ark completely forgot that Charem was a city floating in the air. However, he was again realized this once he emerged on the outer wall of the 20th floor. A 10 km city stretched underneath his foot. More than half of the buildings had turned into ruins with smoke pouring out from it while the downtown area remained perfect.

And beyond the boundaries were clouds! Clouds swept over Charem's shield like a wave. He had crawled through narrow pipes for a few hours so the sudden panoramic view really made him feel good. But that only lasted for a moment. The control tower was located on one end of Charem. In other words, the front looked towards the city while the back was like a cliff. The power facilities was like a lump attached to the back of Charem's control tower. He had to go down the ladder on the outer wall to reach the facilities. By the way.....

Weng weng weng! Weng weng weng! Weng weng weng!

Ark walked along the outer wall until he heard a sound that he could identify. At the bottom of the ladder was a large 20 metre hole. That hole led to the facility that supplied Charem's power! However a huge propeller was spinning at the entrance at a tremendous speed. It was a ventilator designed to clear the toxic fumes created inside the facility. This was the reason that Ark was dangling from the ladder. There was a 20 metre large ventilator covering the entrance. If he got caught in the propeller then he would be cut to pieces.

*–Oh! I didn't think about the ventilator.*

“So there’s no way for me to enter? Is there a way?”

*–All the facilities are managed by the central control system! You have to manually operate the control system to stop the ventilator!*

“If I could touch the control system then I wouldn’t need to come here!

*–..... Oh!*

He really wanted to beat Jay up.

“Dammit, why can’t this be easily resolved?”

In fact, that wasn’t the case. He might’ve become the strongest in New World but he went through a lot of hardships to get to that point. Ark had a long history of being unlucky. He had been in situations like this many times.....

That experience wasn’t a bad thing. It meant he became accustomed to handling things like this. He drew on his experience of being a gamer for several years. And he soon discovered a solution to the problem.

“I have to do it.”

Ark sighed and pulled out the Wire Camera.

“Dammit, the thing that cost me 70 gold.....I have to leave it in a place like this. I have to squeeze as much compensation as possible from Marquis Martin and Lord Java when the quest finishes!”

Ark threw the Wire Camera towards the centre of the propeller. It wrapped around the centre for a while before intertwining with a propeller blade. The next moment.....clang! Clang! Kararara! Ku ku ku kung!

There was a loud sound and the propeller started slowing until it eventually stopped. The Wire Camera wrapped around the centre and acted like a brake. In fact, he knew about this method to stop the propeller as soon as he saw it. But he had to give up 70 gold in exchange. Therefore he wanted to think of another way. However he was tired of wandering the control tower. The fastest way was to give up the 70 gold. The value of the camera would

be nothing compared to the compensation.

“Of course, that only applies if it is completed successfully.”

Ark immediately started descending the ladder. It was an underground facility but it wasn't that deep. No, it was a city in the air so the facilities wouldn't be underground anyway.....anyway, he passed the propeller and a wide area appeared after continuing for another 5 metres.

“This is Charem's power generating facility?”

Ark muttered to himself and looked around. 1 minute had passed since the propeller stopped. He didn't know what fuel the propeller used but a smoky gas covered the area underneath it. The area was approximately 40 meters. He couldn't see the details because of the gas but there was the roar of hundreds of engines working at the same time.

“I'm in the power facility. Now what do I do?”

*-I don't understand how but it is good that you managed to enter the facility. Charem's power facility uses a synthetic ether as fuel so there should be a superluminal particle converter somewhere. It is a cylindrical machine 10 metres in size so it shouldn't be hard to find. If you disconnect the particle converter then the power facility will stop working.*

He didn't know what a superluminal particle converter was but he could find a cylindrical machine immediately. It was a machine that vibrated and emitted a red light!

☞ (Power Supply Switch) ☞

It was even kind enough to indicate the switch for him.

Woong woong woong woong, woong woong woong woong.....

He pressed the button and the vibrating sound of the machines in the facility gradually stopped.

“That's it! I can soon finish this damn quest!”

It took a fortnight to reach this point of the quest. When considering all the suffering that he went through, he felt like collapsing at the thought of it ending.

‘The power is cut so now the shield is also gone? That means I can send a radio wave to Marquis Martin without needing to connect to the communication antenna!’

Ark took out the special communication device that Marquis Martin gave him.

“Federation! Galactic Federation, over! This is Ark!”

---

“Marquis-nim!”

A soldier shouted in a desperate voice.

“A signal is coming in over a closed frequency! It is Ark!”

“Ark? Are you sure?”

Marquis Martin got up suddenly and asked.

“Yes, it is the frequency of the special communication device. The person also said that he was Ark!”

“Connect the signal right now!”

“Understood!”

The soldier quickly manipulated the panel.

*-Hey, can you hear me? I’m Ark! Galactic Federation, over!*

‘That voice clearly belongs to Ark!’

“It is me. Ark. It is Marquis Martin!”

*-Eh? Marquis-nim? I didn’t think that Marquis-nim would receive this*

*directly. How are you?*

“Let’s skip the small talk. Where are you now? Charem? Are you in Charem?”

*–Huhuhuhu, that is correct.*

“You’re now in Charem? You’re really contacting us from Charem?”

*-That’s right. Who am I? Somehow I completed it. By the way, there seems to be a misunderstanding. When I entered I discovered that the situation is more tangled than I thought. Do you know how much I’ve suffered because of it? No, that doesn’t matter. I need to tell Marquis Martin the detailed information.....*

“A misunderstanding?”

*-Yes, the reason that Charem broke off contact with the federation.....heok! Waaaah!*

“Ark! What’s going on? Ark, answer me!”

Marquis Martin screamed through the communication device with a desperate voice. Then the communication soldier shook his head and said.

“..... The connection has been lost.”

“It suddenly disconnected? What on earth.....and he talked about a misunderstanding?”

Marquis Martin stared at the communication device before raising his head and asked.

“Communication soldier, did you manage to get the GPS information from the signal?”

“Yes, the location is X0588, Y-489, the sky above the northern lake!”

Marquis Martin grabbed a uniform on a hangar and shouted.

“Deputy, send an emergency signal to the galactic federation’s special

operation centre. Inform the governor of Nabe. Make him gather all cruisers with a photon movement function loaded at the port. Once all the cruisers are gathered, make them warp to X-599, Y489. The primary goal is to take control of Charem. If that isn't possible.....”

Marquis Martin paused before continuing.

“Then we will destroy Charem.”

---

“Pant pant pant! Pant pant pant!”

Ark gasped as he touched the particle converter.

“Oh my god! Why didn't I think of that?”

When Ark was communicating with Marquis Martin. Ark suddenly felt a sensation in his body. This wasn't the first time he felt that feeling. It was the same as when the Phoenix members were in the elevator and it fell from the surprise attack! A lightning bolt then flashed through Ark's head.

‘W-wait? Isn't Charem a city in the air? I don't know what the structure is but it is obviously operated through some mechanisms. If the power was cut off all of a sudden.....’

It was obvious what would happen.

.....Fall!

Charem was falling at an absurd speed.

‘I didn't think about the consequences of disconnecting the power! Did spending several days dealing with the Sufferers rot my head?’

Ark's head wasn't the only one that rotted. It was clear that the head of research Jay's head also melted away. But now wasn't the time to curse. Charem was a huge 10 km wide city with a large mass. That city was

falling several thousand metres in the sky. It would be a terrible collision even if it hit the lake. Everybody in Charem would be injured or dead. Especially if they were in one of the lower facilities like Ark. He would be crushed by the weight on top of him!

“Heok! Waaaaah!”

That’s when he screamed through the communication device.

Ark belatedly realized the situation and yanked at his head. Then a small button caught his eye and gave him some hope.....

☞ (Power Supply Switch) ☞

‘Y-yes! The particle converter! I might be able to stop it if I turn on the power!’

And he pressed the ON switch! He stopped getting that sinking feeling.

“I-it stopped! I’m alive!”

He didn’t see it but he could feel it directly with his body. That’s why the communication with Marquis Martin stopped in the middle. The power was restored which meant that Charem was wrapped in the shield again and the radio waves were cut off. So Charem was back in its original sealed state.....

“The original quest I received was to send Charem’s GPS information to the federation. The communication might’ve been disconnected in the middle but the GPS information was still passed on. If the federation army arrives then all the problems will be solved. I no longer have to disconnect the power.”

And there was some time before the federation would arrive. Just as Ark was relaxing.

Ku ku ku ku! Kukung!

A loud ringing sound was heard from behind him. He was still tense from the fall so his heart jumped.

“Heok! T-this sound is? It sounds like something falling into the hole.....”

Ark turned his head and stiffened. A huge object had appeared in the facility filled with smoke. And the sloppy flesh slapped against the ground. The huge shadow dragged its body and headed towards Ark.

“Is that.....?”

Ark stuttered with shock and retreated.

-The destruction ranked monster ‘Mumu’  
has emerged!

The warning message flashed before his eyes. The huge flesh fell towards him.

## Like a Phoenix!

Kwa kwa kwa kwang!

The huge body rose off the floor. The man rolled around as it fell.

“Oh my god! The Mumu.....these guys.....how did the Mumu.....?”

Ark stared at the huge body with astounded eyes. The slime like body was definitely similar to the Mumu that he saw in the Charenjok’s hiding spot. But there was one crucial difference. It was clear just from the name recorded on the information window.

-The destruction ranked monster ‘Mumu’ has emerged!

It only had one name! It was called the Mumu. This Mumu was a huge collection of dozens of other Mumus. It wasn’t just the size. The Mumu in the hiding spot had smooth and wriggly skin like jelly and was cute. However he couldn’t find that type of charm in this creature. He didn’t know if it had anything to do with Osiris’ curse but it had turned into a disgusting black mass. He saw the creepy skin and remembered something.

‘I.....I’ve seen that before!’

It was the black form he witnessed at the top of the elevator shaft!

‘There’s no doubt about it. This guy. He is the one who attacked the elevator and swallowed the Phoenix members hanging in the shaft!’

It became increasingly clear. The Phoenix squad’s enemy!

Roaaaaar!

Then the black form flew at Ark again. Long tentacles spouted from the body and shot towards Ark. He rolled his body and there was a roar as the tentacles hit the ground and caused pits. The tentacles had tremendous power! The

Mumu that was the Phoenix squad's enemy! And maybe.....it was Ark's enemy.

'Damn, I've reached this point.....'

Ark bit his lip and glared at the Mumu. Even if they were hanging in the vertical passage, the Mumu was able to instantly defeat the 30 strong members of the Phoenix squad. He was facing such a monster alone. Ark was thinking it was all over!He didn't know how that monster got here but it was a disaster for Ark.

'Dammit, why did this have to happen?'

Various curse words rose in his throat. But after a moment, Ark took a deep breath and pushed it down.

'Calm down Ark! You shouldn't become so upset that you'll become rushed. The attack is incredibly fast and powerful but it isn't impossible to stop. An attack in a straight line like the previous one will be easy to avoid. I have to focus on the fight! And.....'

Ark looked at a cylinder with a blue light in his bag. It was the mana battery pack that he received from the Rama's bunker on Beltana. It was an item that could restore 1,000 mana when wearing the battle suit. Ark had obtained 2 battery packs from the Rama. He had used one of them fighting against the Gigantic on Beltana. He had used the battery pack to summon the Hell hound and trick Valencia. And he thought about using the remaining one on the 40th floor. In fact, Ark had expected something like this to a certain extent. He didn't know a huge Mumu would emerge but he hadn't expected it to end that easily. He had bad luck inside the game so his intuition had sensed something. Thanks to his intuition he was prepared for something happening. Anyway, thanks to that Ark's battle suit was 100% charged!

"Armour armament!"

Then Ark stood up and shouted. A shock wave spread out as the armour was

summon and enveloped Ark's body. The glossy black battle suit that looked like an insect carapace wrapped around Ark's body. Ark opened both arms and shouted.

“Super alloy dagger! Fire Eagle P-40!”

The sides of his bag opened and both weapons sprang out. It was the shotgun that Ark used as a primary weapon, the Fire Eagle P-40! In his left hand was his dagger!

“Not yet! Mind shield!”

-The Mind Shield has been activated.

<A shield with 270 durability has been generated around the body. The shield will reduce all damage by 40~60% until the durability falls to 0.

In addition, the effect of Backstab or Sudden Blow will be nullified by 100%>

A blue sphere was created around the battle suit after the information window appeared. His battle mode was completed!

“Now let's go! Be prepared to die!”

Ark's eyes shone red as the helmet closed up and turned. And the moment he looked at the Mumu!

Cheolpeok! Chwaak! Cheolpeok! Chwaak! Cheolpeok! Chwaak!

The Mumu's body vibrated violently. 6 bits of flesh 4~5 metres long shot towards the ground and supported the huge body. It looked exactly like a spider! The shape was exactly the same as the spiders created by the meteorite.

“W-wait a minute! A Mumu! Aren't you a Mumu? The Mumu that attacked the elevator? Why did it suddenly turn to a spider? Isn't this cheap? What is

your identity?”

Ark thought the monster only had the tentacles. It might be fast but it could only go in one direction so it was easily avoided if he concentrated. So he had thought the odds were in his favour. But it suddenly grew 6 legs!

“This is a foul!”

Kuaaaaaah!

The Mumu’s entire body started moving like a storm. Six legs at the same time? Tentacles? Body? Anyway, the long legs started moving like a whip towards Ark.

“Dammit!”

Ark cursed as he turned his body.

Bang! Bang! Bang! Bang! Bang!

It was the sound of the legs continuously striking the ground. While avoiding a huge impact, he moved in the wrong direction and backed up against a wall. Ark was pushed by the impact into the wall. But there was no time for him to scream. The Mumu’s legs were flying straight towards him.

“B-block it.....Sonic Sword!”

Ark raised his dagger. A ringing sound occurred and he could feel pain throughout his entire body. He called it a leg for convenience but the flesh was 1 metre thick. It was impossible to stop the shock wave produced by such a huge body with a dagger. Ark who had used his dagger to block was stuck between the Mumu’s leg and the wall. But this wasn’t the end of the Mumu’s attacks. The Mumu started pushing its leg down towards Ark. Then its body started spinning and sparks flew between the wall and the battle suit.

damage!

-32

damage.....

His health fell at a tremendous speed. The great power pressed him against the wall and he was grounded like a pestle. Rather than a battle, it was like the Mumu was using Ark as a toy to play with.

‘No! I can’t fight properly like this!’

Ark bit his lip and desperately lifted the Fire Eagle.

“Ouch! Ouch! S-Set Bullets Shooting!”

Cheolkeok, cheolkeok, cheolkeok! Pepepeng!

Flames shot out from Ark and the leg was blown off. At the same time a piece of flesh fell off the leg. Ark kicked off from the wall and rolled several metres away. His health had decreased by 20% in just a few seconds. A loss of 20% at the start of the battle was a painful loss.

‘The Mind Shield didn’t even hold up against that damage.....he didn’t know what it was but the firepower was destructive. I’ll die if I’m even careless for a short while.’

Kwa kwa kwa kwa kwa kwa!

Another leg was approaching from the other side. Ark’s battle style was to block the enemy’s attack with the dagger and then using the pistol or shotgun to counterattack. However his dagger couldn’t stop the huge leg.

‘But!’

Pepepeng!

Bullets spewed from the muzzle of the Fire Eagle. The Mumu’s leg was pushed back and flesh torn off. It was the effect of the shotgun!

‘But that guy has 6 legs. On the other hand, the firing rate of the Fire Eagle was 3 seconds! I can’t stop all of the legs using just the Fire Eagle. I have to avoid the rest. Fortunately this area is wider than the control tower. I can take full advantage of the facility if I concentrate. I can’t stop moving my legs!’

Ark turned around and ran through the legs in the opposite direction. The firing speed was 3 seconds so he made sure to shoot every 3 seconds. He had to use the weapon to stop the legs.

Kwa kwang! Kakak! Kakak! Kakak!

He would attack with the dagger whenever the leg was pushed back. But the level 20 dagger couldn’t deal any damage to a boss monster of the control tower. Even when he dealt a few hits, he couldn’t see any signs that the Mumu’s health was decreasing. It was the same with the Fire Eagle. The Mumu’s body wasn’t iron so the Fire Eagle would exert 100% of the damage but it only lost 1% with every bullet that hit.

‘I can’t be hasty. Right now avoiding damage is more important than dealing it. I can keep attacking as long as I don’t receive more damage. The most important thing right now it to endure it. If I hold out as long as possible then I can also read the attack patterns! My swordsmanship and Fire Eagle will be used as a shield instead of a weapon!’

Offense through defense! That was the tactic that Ark chose. And with that tactic, using the Fire Eagle to push back the Mumu’s legs was more important than ever. He needed to step carefully or there might be a fatal result.

“Set Bullets Shooting!”

Cheolkeok, cheolkeok, cheolkeok! Pepepeng!

Ark placed the muzzle on the approaching leg and pulled the trigger. He avoided the attacks from the other legs, reloaded the gun and swung his dagger when he could no longer avoid the legs.

Pepepeng!

There was no time to think once the battle began in earnest. He also had no time to check the Mumu's body. Ark ran around the wide power generating facility! Blocking two legs took a lot and it required all his concentration if four legs attacked at once. How much time had passed?

'Now I'm starting to see the pattern. At first I had no room to think but the moves become simple once I'm used to it. It sometimes shows irregular movement but I can hold up if I use the Fire Eagle!'

Tuntun said that the Mumu was a creature with almost no intelligence. It might've changed to a huge Mumu but it was still stupid. In the beginning he didn't have the timing and received a lot of damage. Now he couldn't avoid it to a certain extent and had room to breathe. But it had high attack and defense so it would take him a while to defeat it. Ark was good at fights but he couldn't keep up his concentration forever. He had to defeat it while his concentration was maintained!

'Now is the time to switch to attack!'

Ark turned his body and stared at the Mumu.

Snap!

There was a crack as he received a huge impact to his stomach. The pressure pushed Ark backwards and he looked down at his stomach.

"Ugh! What is this? This is.....chunks of iron? No, machine parts! These are machine parts?"

Various mechanical parts were lodged into his stomach. The extravagant pressure was caused by the chunks of iron hitting him.

"P-Perhaps?"

Ark suddenly lifted his head. The Mumu's body on the 6 legs was swollen like a balloon and metal objects were flying from its mouth.

Peng!

Ark reflexively lowered his body and the iron chunks hit behind him. The metal parts had barely missed Ark.

“U-unbelievable.....t-this bastard.....it can even do ranged attacks?”

The huge Mumu had picked up metal parts while travelling around the control tower and now it was launching them as projectiles. The huge Mumu used its recycling ability to create projectiles! But he wasn't complimenting it. This ability was terrible for someone fighting the Mumu like Ark. The situation changed 180 degrees once the Mumu started to shoot the iron chunks. The situation had been good for him because he became familiar with the leg's attacks. But that pattern didn't help once the iron chunks were added. The iron bullets flew at a speed difficult for him to see!

Peng-snap! Peng-snap! Peng-snap!

The Mumu fired the iron chunks every 0.1 second. The iron chunks aimed at his legs, shoulders and head. Fortunately this was the power generating facility and it was filled with various mechanical devices. He could hide behind those machines to catch his breath. But that only lasted for a moment.

Peng! Peng! Peng! Peng! Snap! Kwa kwa kwa kwang!

The machines crashed to the ground when it was hit by the indiscriminate shower of bullets.

“Pant pant pant, the Mumu! I can't die like this!”

Ark face darkened as he ran and confirmed how much of his health had decreased. He confirmed that his health was reduced to 60%. On the other hand, the Mumu still had 90% health left. He had attacked dozens of times with the Fire Eagle and only reduced the health by 10%. Now the chance of him winning was 0.1%.

“Dammit! This isn't funny! I'm Ark! I can't die like this!”

Cheolkeok, cheolkeok, cheolkeok! Pepepeng!

Ark ran behind the machines and attacked for 5 minutes. Then something unthinkable occurred. One of the pipes that was broken from the Mumu's attack started spreading unidentified gas. The gas ignited when Ark shot his Fire Eagle and flames spread everywhere.

“Oh my god.....!”

Ark watched the flames and murmured in a blank voice. Suddenly a shadow jumped out from the flames and stood in front of Ark. In the next moment the flames parted like the Red Sea.

*–Fire! There is fire! Start the fire prevention tasks!*

Chwaaaaah!

Water started to stream down from the ceiling.

“H-how.....?”

Ark who had been raising his Fire Eagle muttered with a stupid expression. Ark started at the man that appeared through the flames. The man had a large body and red hair like fire!

“Pureah?”

“Alan!”

Then he heard a familiar voice from behind. Ark reflexively turned his head and his mouth widened. One man was descending the ladder connected to the control tower's outer wall. The light attached to the battle suit revealed that he was the leader of Phoenix's team B, Clark.

“Clark? And Pureah as well! T-then the other members?”

“It is only us!”

Clark jumped down from the ladder and aimed his arms at the Mumu.

“Energy Blast!”

10 lights simultaneously formed from Clark's battle suit. It moved in a circuit

to gather at his wrist and was fired as a ball of light. Energy blast was the main weapon of Clark's Esper battle suit! The mana ball was guided like a missile and exploded when it hit the Mumu's body.

Roaaaaar!

Clark ran up to him while the Mumu wobbled.

“Alan, are you okay? Why did you break your connection to the multiple communication network? Don't you know we thought you were dead?”

“Huh? B-but I checked it shortly after the surprise attack in the elevator.....”

“At that time I used a grenade and spatial movement to barely escape. But my Nymphe received damage from the grenade exploded and didn't work for a while. It was the same for Pureah. Pureah used the flamethrower when he was eaten and he was immediately thrown up again. You probably checked your Nymphe when mine wasn't working and Pureah was still eaten. I met up with Pureah but you didn't connect to the network so I thought you were dead.”

Ark broke the network connection after he checked it. He was the only one who escaped from the elevator so there was no reason to maintain the connection when he needed to talk to Jay. Anyway, since then Clark and Pureah proceeded with the mission. They were in the vicinity of the 20th floor when Charem suddenly started falling. That was when Ark cut the power to the particle accelerator. Clark thought that a problem occurred in the power facility so they went there and saw the Wire Camera Ark used to stop the propeller. Then they descended the ladder and saw Ark fighting the Mumu.

“But I never imagined.....you would be fighting here alone. You might've guessed already but that thing is out enemy. At that time.....I saw it clearly. It swallowing my colleagues inside the dark shaft!”

Clark glared at the Mumu.

“That monster bastard, I can’t let it go now that I’ve encountered it again! Let’s show the power of the Phoenix squad! Let’s go Alan! We’re going to get revenge for the colleagues inside its stomach!”

“Ohhhhhh!”

Clark and Pureah yelled and ran up to the Mumu. The situation changed once Clark and Pureah joined.

“Energy Blast!”

“Burning flames, Frame Buster!”

A ball of light and flames flew towards the Mumu. In a fantasy world, slime like monsters would be weak to magic. It was the same with Galaxian. The Mumu’s health started going down at a ridiculous speed after being hit by the mana sphere and the flames. But they couldn’t take the counterattack of the Mumu lightly. It swung its legs and continuously fired iron chunks. While they had the best firepower in the Phoenix squad, Clark was an Esper so he had weak defense while Pureah’s movement was slow thanks to the flamethrower.

‘If Clark and Pureah die then there is no way to defeat the Mumu! I need to draw the attacks!’

“Take this! Set Bullets Shooting!”

Cheolkeok, cheolkeok, cheolkeok! Pepepeng!

Ark attacked the Mumu with the Fire Eagle. The water from the sprinklers above his head continued putting out the flames. Furthermore, the fan had stopped working so the facility was filled with thick smoke. Ark ran around in the thick smoke and attacked the Mumu while Clark and Pureah kept on attacking as well.

“Pant pant pant, this terrible guy. Where did this monster come from.....?”

Clark groaned in the middle of the battle.

Clark was still unaware of what it was. The opponent was the Mumu that worked as a floor cleaner. The Mumu's combat power was beyond what was expected for something that worked as a floor cleaner. Even though Clark and Pureah joined, the Mumu still has a 6:4 advantage. That wasn't the only problem.

-Danger! Danger!

The concentration of toxic fumes in this area has reached the limit! If you don't leave this area quickly then you can suffer fatal nerve damage!

<If you can't escape within the time limit then various penalties will be applied to your stats>

Time remaining: 50 seconds, 49 seconds, 48 seconds.....

It wasn't necessary to say but the body coating wasn't invincible. The power generating facility was a place that make all sorts of harmful gases. Unidentified fumes and various gases were leaking from the pipe. The ventilation also stopped so the gathered gases rose beyond the level that his body could endure. Thankfully Ark's resistance rose by 50% thanks to his Survivor coating so the penalty wasn't applied yet. But Clark and Pureah already received the penalty.

“Ugh! I-I'm feeling dizzy.....!”

“Ouch! I feel sick! V-vomiting.....!”

It was so intense that the Pureah vomited out of the bottom of his helmet. Their movement speed and hit rate also decreased so the battle was become more disadvantageous as time passed.

‘ It is suicide to stay here! We have to move out of here before it is too late!’

Ark eyed the hole connected to the top of the control tower. It was the only exit. In fact, Ark had tried to escape many times when fighting against the

Mumu. But the Mumu wasn't just watching. If he climbed the ladder here as a 99% chance he would be hit.

'It is possible now that Clark and Pureah are here!'

"Clark, Pureah, focus your attacks on its ankle and sneak out of here!"

"Damn, it can't be helped. Pureah!"

They were experienced soldiers so long explanations weren't needed.

"Burning flames, Frame Buster!"

"Energy Blast!"

"Set Bullets Shooting!"

All the attacks exploded on the Mumu's body. While the Mumu was stumbling around, the three soldiers turned and ran towards the ladder. Ark turned once he reached the ladder and reloaded the Fire Eagle.

"You guys climb up first!"

"Understood. Pureah, let's go!"

Clark and Pureah climbed the ladder. Ark shot the approaching Mumu and jumped up.

Kuaaaaah!

The Mumu let out a roar of anger behind him.

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Kwaaaaah! Kwaaaaah!

A storm blew and scattered the clouds. The space distorted and dozens of space ships appeared. A soldier on the space ship in the centre turned his head and shouted.

"Photon movement is complete! We're arrived at the target coordinates!"

“Can you see any objects in range?”

“I can’t see anything!”

“Is there a shield?”

Marquis Martin looked around with sharp eyes at the expanse of clouds in front of him. Marquis Martin had mobilized dozens of cruisers after receiving the GPS information from Ark’s transmission.

“They are hiding well like parasites but.....”

The corners of Marquis Martin’s mouth lifted.

“Deputy, check the photon distribution in this region. If those guys used light speed movement to escape then there should be a large amount of photon distribution.”

“The figures are normal. No signs of moving photons are detected.”

“They are still hiding then. Okay, use the optical scanner. Search every corner of this 20 km area while the height will be 3 km from this space ship.”

Tutung! Tutung! Tutung!

10 circular flying objects flew at Marquis Martin’s command. They started to slowly search in a range of 20 km and a height of 3 km. After a moment, sparks started flying from one of the circular objects and a huge object was revealed. It was a city covered in transparent glass!

“We’ve finally exposed them! That rat den Charem!”

The circular objects launched just now was an optical scanner. It radiated a strong disturbance radio wave in the designated area to find anyone hiding. And the optical scanner was able to release Charem’s camouflage function. The circumstances were as good as finished now that he had arrived.

“Install the dimension net around Charem!”

Dozens of gas objects were thrown from the cruisers surrounding Charem. When the gases connected, a huge net made of red light was formed. Just like the name, the dimension net was able to stop warp or photon movement. Marquis Martin spoke in a relaxed voice once the dimension net was installed.

“Charem has been discovered using the optical signal. We’re the army belonging to the galactic federation. This is a warning to the stateless city ship that invaded the galactic federation illegally. If you don’t release the shield within 30 seconds then we will be forced to shoot you down.”

Marquis Martin’s words were changed to an optical signal and sent to Charem. But there was no reaction from Charem. There couldn’t be a reaction. The Sufferers were wandering the control tower so there was no one to receive the signal. So 10 seconds passed.

“Are they trying to hold up? They must think lightly of the federation.”

Marquis Martin folded his arms and laughed. The soldiers sitting in front of the panel looked puzzled and said.

“Marquis-nim, the photon distribution is rapidly increasing in the area 2 km ahead! Photon movement! It seems to be a few Ogre-class cruisers based on the photon distribution. There are at least 5 of them!”

“Finally the master of the rats have arrived.”

Kwaaaaah! Kwaaaaah!

As soon as Marquis Martin’s words ended, a storm occurred and 5 cruisers showed up. Various characters were carved on the side of the cruisers. The soldier who confirmed it nervously swallowed his saliva.

“They are from the 3rd alien confederacy. The Aschulat cruisers.”

“Marquis-nim, we are receiving some communication.”

“Allow the connection. I want to hear what they have to say.”

A screen appeared in the control room and showed an alien species. Marquis Martin started talking as soon as he saw the alien that looked like ET.

“Ha, who is this? Aren’t you Aschulat’s ambassador? How unexpected. You said you had no time when I asked for an interview many times so why are you here?”

*–Marquis Martin, what are you doing here?*

The ET alien sent Marquis Martin a nasty look.

“What are I doing? Shouldn’t I ask you that question? I don’t know what you mean. I was just doing military training in this territory. Yet there was a huge accident and I discovered this stateless city ship hiding here. It is impossible for us to pretend not to see it.”

*–Marquis, don’t you know? Charem.....*

“Does that mean it is associated with the Aschulat?”

*–No, that.....*

“Of course that is impossible. I’ve found this city accidentally but I’ve heard rumours about it. This is the city that serves as the focal point for smugglers in the north. Surely our allies the Aschulat won’t be associated with something like this. There are rumours that the senior politicians of the federation tolerated this city’s presence in exchange for information. Yet didn’t the Aschulat break the agreement? In other words, Charem is just a free, illegal city. It doesn’t matter if I shoot them down.”

*–Marquis Martin, you.....*

ET glared at the Marquis. Then the ET alien rolled its eyes and sighed.

*–Okay. You know the circumstances so I won’t mess around. To be honest, we’ve been worried about Charem for a while. One day they suddenly cut off all communication. While we were surveying this area, we detect the radio wave of a nearby communication signal. Now I just want to ask. If Marquis*

*Martin is here then that means the communication was sent to you. Does that mean the reason Charem broke off the communication is also related to you?*

“Are you trying to place the blame on me?”

Marquis Martin smiled and nodded.

“Indeed. You’ve devised a plausible excuse.”

*–Excuse?*

“Well it doesn’t matter what you say.”

Marquis Martin ignored the ET’s words and looked at the deputy soldier.

“Deputy, tell all ships to prepare for bombardment. The target is the city in front of us!”

*–Marquis, do you think you will be safe if you do something like this? It will be a war!*

“Shut up!”

Marquis Martin raised his head and exclaimed.

“Do you think the federation will tremble at a threat like that forever? I’m saying this clearly from the position of an ally. Will you support or stop us? If you can’t answer clearly then disappear. And return to your home planet. If you want then I will give you a war!”

*–Marquis, you have made a big mistake!*

“I guess so.”

Marquis Martin smiled and turned away. And he was about to give an order to the dozens of cruisers aimed at Charem.

“Marquis-nim, something is strange. Look at this. Half of Charem has been changed into ruins. Furthermore, the speech signals won’t penetrate the shield but thousands of people are flocking and waving their hands towards us. It is like they are welcoming us.”

“Welcoming us? That is.....”

Marquis Martin muttered and frowned. Then a soldier suddenly shouted.

“Over there! The outer walls of Charem’s control tower!”

Another screen appeared next to the one of the ET. Charem’s central control tower was emitting black smoke and people climbing up a ladder on the outer wall. Marquis Martin didn’t know the first two people but he was surprised at the identity of the third man.

“That helmet is clearly Ark! He was alive?”

Ark had screamed in the middle of a conversation and disconnected it. Marquis Martin thought he had connected the communication device to the antenna before being caught by guards. Yet he was unexpectedly on the control tower’s outer wall.

“Why is that guy over there? What’s going on.....?”

Marquis Martin murmured with confusion. Then he saw something emerge from the hold and wrapped around Ark’s ankles.

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“The federation and Aschulat’s cruisers!”

Ark heard Clark’s cry while he was climbing out of the hole. He turned and saw dozens of space ships. The streamlined cruisers with the logo of a blue planet belonged to the federation.

“That’s it! They’ve come!”

A cry emerged from Ark’s mouth. The federation’s cruisers had finally arrived at Charem. Now the problem of Charem could be settled. And Ark would also receive the quest reward! Ark’s eyes couldn’t see the guns aimed at Charem. The aliens hiding in the safety zone were the same. The aliens were so shaken by the horrors of the Sufferers that they didn’t notice the

tense situation between the federation and Aschulat. Anyway!

“That’s it. If I deal with this guy then the rest will somehow.....”

Ark murmured as he crept up the ladder.

Hwiririri! Chwarararak!

Then dozens of tentacles emerged from the bottom and wrapped around him.

“Ugh! W-what is this? That bastard!”

Ark’s face warped as he looked down. The Mumu was sticking to the wall like gum and creeping up it. The flesh was torn from Ark, Clark and Pureah’s attacks but there were enough flesh to form tentacles to wrap around Ark. At the same time Ark experienced a huge pulling force.

“Alan! Damn! Energy Blast!”

“Frame Burst!”

Light and flames poured down from the top. A few tentacles were torn or burnt but it was ineffective. The Mumu continuously wrapped more tentacles around Ark. Ark was unable to go up the ladder and the Mumu was gradually approaching the propeller.

‘I made a mistake! I can’t separate from this guy! In that case.....’

Ark looked down for a while before grinding his teeth together.

“Shall I end this? Okay, let’s see this through to the end!”

Ark shouted and released his hand from the ladder. Ark was pulled by the tentacles and fell.

“Heok! A-Alan! What are you doing?”

“Is he trying to catch that monster for us.....?”

“Oh my god! That brat! No! We can’t lose him now that we’ve reached this point! The Aschulat and federation cruisers just arrived.....he can’t die like

this!”

Clark yelled at him from above.

“I’m alive!”

Ark yelled from the bottom. Clark and Pureah had misunderstood the reason why Ark jumped off. Of course his colleagues were also important to Ark. But this was all to secure his own safety. No matter how much they became friends, he wasn’t going to sacrifice what he got over the last fortnight. Ark fell down because the odds were in his favour.

Tong-!

Ark had fallen onto a propeller’s blade. Then he rolled until he was about to fall between the blades into the facility.

‘There!’

Ark took out a small object and threw it. He immediately fell between the gap into the power facility.

Pejik, pejik, kwa kwa kwa kwang!

An explosion occurred in the centre of the propeller. The explosion snapped the Wire Camera tangled around the centre of the propeller and it started turning again. The Mumu was still near the propeller as it hadn’t followed Ark’s action! There was no need to imagine the following scene.

Ka ka ka ka! Ka ka ka ka! Ka ka ka ka!

It was the awful sound of flesh being torn up. The Mumu’s enormous body was unable to follow Ark and was cut by the propeller. How much time had passed? Finally large lumps of flesh fell into the facility. The upper portion of the body also fell and a spider emerged from it.

‘The curse! It is the core of the Mumu!’

“18 Barrage!”

Ark ran towards the spider and shouted. At the same time, the shoulders of the Hyper Drone opened and steam emerged. His fists started to move like engines were attached to them.

Kwa kwa kwa kwa kwa kwa!

The mana was finished and the battle suit recalled.

-Your level has risen!

-Your level has risen!

-Your level has risen.....

The messages popped up in front of Ark. His screen was filled with 7 level up messages! He had gained 7 levels.

“Pant pant pant! It is a success!”

The battle suit disappeared and Ark felt drained. He was drenched in sweat and gasping for breath as he looked at the fiercely spinning propeller.

“I never thought it would be used like that.”

It was the object Ark had thrown before rolling off the propeller. It was the ‘tiny bomb for suicide’ that he received from Marquis Martin. It caused an explosion like a grenade but the range wasn’t strong enough to blow up everything in the area. It was able to destroy the Wire Camera without damaging the propeller. Marquis Martin gave him the bomb to blow himself up if something went wrong but it ended up saving his life. Once again, every item he gathered could be used in the future.

“But it’s up to here. I no longer have the strength to move.”

Ark muttered as he flopped to the ground with exhaustion.

“Alan, are you alive? Just wait! I’ll teleport down.....”

“N-no! I’m fine! Just stay there until the fan gets rid of all the gas!”

Ark raised his upper body and shouted. And he got up despite wanting to lay down and sleep. This room contained the corpse of a boss monster that gave him 7 levels. Loot of a considerable standard was likely to be dropped by the boss monster. Ark had no intention of sharing the loot with NPCs. Yet Clark was thinking about teleporting to his location?

“Damn, they don’t give me any time to breath!”

Ark cursed and moved his body. In fact, the Mumu has dropped many items in different directions thanks to the propeller. Most of them were machine parts picked up from the tower and bullets. But Ark used his Dig skill to search through the body and found an amazing item.

-Ray Steel??? (Unique)

Item Type: Removable Grenade Launcher Wearer Restriction: Level 100

Attack: 15~120 Firing Rate: 20.40Sec

Durability: 18/30 Number of Ammunition: 3

A grenade launcher found in the body of a mutated Mumu. Although the Ray Steel is slower than grenade launchers exclusively for heavy armoured troops, it is a secondary device that can be attached to rifles and is useful on the battlefield.

The Ray Steel has transformed in a strange manner in the Mumu’s stomach and general grenades can’t be loaded anymore. When a metal of a suitable size is loaded into it, it would be compressed and converted into a strange type of bullet. Therefore it can’t produce the explosive results of a normal grenade launcher. But the strongest is that you don’t need to waste money buying expensive grenades. You can use any metal or

machine as a projectile.

However, the damage will depend on the metal or machine parts used. It is a good chance to get rid of wasteful japtem when there is no room in your bag!

<Strength +20, Stamina +10>

<Special Option (Bullet Production): Metal or mechanical parts can be changed into bullets and launched>

\* Can be attached to rifle affiliated items

A grenade launcher that used metal parts to fire bullets! It was different from the grenade launchers exclusively used by heavy armour troops. His level was too low to use it and the attack was 15~120 but it was a unique weapon! The Ray Steel was a normal item sold in stores but it transformed while within the Mumu's stomach and a unique weapon was born.

'I can get a lot for it even if I don't use it directly.

Ark packed it in his bag and started to collect the smaller items. His bag became full with machine parts but he had no intention of abandoning even 1 copper. In addition, the metal parts could contribute to his hacking skill. After 10 minutes. Ark gathered all the useable scrap iron and looked at the propeller.

"It is good that I destroyed the Mumu with it....but the propeller is rotating again so I can't get up. Do I have to wait here until the federation retakes the management system? Well it can't be helped. I'll just increase my hacking proficiency until then."

Ark sat down, grabbed one of the circuits and connected it to his Nymph. And he eventually raised his skill proficiency.

"Eh? T-this is?"

Information that he hadn't possible considered was shown on his Nymphe screen.

## That Guy, This Guy, That Guy

“A demotion?”

“No, that is.....”

The middle aged man scratched his head with an embarrassed expression. It didn't matter even if he didn't reply. His facial expressions and gestures showed everything clearly. Irina replied with an emotionless face.

“I understand what you're saying.”

“I'm sorry.”

“That's okay. I know this isn't your intention. I made up my mind when I decide to disobey Commander Haman's instructions.”

After the Beltana war ended, she had expected to be sent to Hanan which was the hardest fought battlefield. She was generally indifferent to everything but she was also a user. And a user always needed experience. However the announcement was delayed for a fortnight and.....All of a sudden she received a notification from the section chief she belonged to and was given an unexpected mission. Irina was able to notice the rough situation immediately.

‘Commander Haman.’

Although the Beltana battle ended with the federation's victory, Commander Haman was pushed into a corner. Ark was displayed as a war hero and the federation was concerned the media would start criticizing their treatment of prisoners so they pushed all the criticism towards the incompetence of Commander Haman. Naturally this was because of Irina. She rebelled against Haman but it didn't work. Ark was the one who solved the problem himself. He placed the video of the battle onto the internet and attracted the interest of users and NPCs. But Haman didn't forget that fact that she

rebelled. The federation members also didn't forget that she went against the decision of the higher ups. This mission she couldn't understand was probably retaliation for that incident.

'All the worlds are the same. Power was everything. This is a game so I was hoping that justice would win in here.....'

But there wasn't anything she could do. She wasn't the type of protest in front of the presidential office. She had no ambition for changing the world. She just wanted a small shelter to relax. A small shelter where the eyes of a callous father won't reach.....

"I don't understand."

The section chief said as he stared at her.

"You knew about the circumstances of the federation yet you were still determined. I heard that you were about to receive a promotion to lieutenant soon. But that promotion was put off. So far you've never caused any problems. You also never showed interest in other people's matters. Therefore I don't understand why you did acted in a way that would attract Haman's backlash. Is that Ark person someone special to you?"

"Special?"

"Isn't he? I know that you're not an emotional person."

"I'm not an emotional person....."

Irina murmured with a strange expression. When she thought about it, the section chief's words were right. She fled from her father into Galaxian and resolved to do all the work in her own way. That's why she was obsessed with sticking to the rules. It was illogical that she took such actions on Beltana. It was definitely strange. This was also the part that her section chief was asking about.

'At that time I was angry. Why? I didn't like Commander Haman's actions

but there were different ways to dispute it. But I visited Commander Haman and questioned him excessively. Why did I act like that? What made me so angry? Does it have something to do with Ark like the section chief said? No, that is impossible.'

Irina thought for a while before shaking his head.

"I don't understand either."

"Hey hey, why does your answer have no sincerity?"

"It is unrelated to my sincerity. I just don't know."

"That sounds like you."

The section chief smiled and said. But Irina didn't say anything else. The section chief watched her for a while before saying.

"Anyway, this situation might be a little uncomfortable but just endure it. The atmosphere in the upper ranks is improving. If you handle this mission well then you'll probably receive that lieutenant promotion. I don't know if this will be a comfort but this mission isn't easy. If the media is aware of it then the federation's reputation might nosedive again so please deal with it before then. Do you understand? I recognize your skills so I believe you can handle this."

"Understood."

"This is the material sent from the field."

The section chief handed her a file that said.

-Report on the mass breakout at the orbit prison Stael.

A new quest was registered after she read the words on the file

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“It’s been a while.”

Ark looked around with interested eyes. Paved roads were stretched out in all directions from the fountain in the plaza and chattering crowds were everywhere. Men and women wearing robes were sitting on benches reading magic books while merchants were selling goods in street stalls. Users wearing armour were shouting to gather users for hunting in dungeons. And chicken were crying from nearby buildings.

“This is the good part about New World.”

Ark laughed while sitting on a bench. That’s right. This wasn’t the pioneering era in the 24th century. It was a world in the 10th century.....a different world. Instead of a world of gun and missiles, New World was a world of swords and magic. And this place was Selebrid, the capital city of the Schudenberg kingdom. Why was Ark suddenly in New World? It occurred a couple of days ago.

“Did you know?”

He had dropped in at Global Exos. The Planning Department chief Ha Myung-woo suddenly asked him.

“Huh? What?”

“The number of people connecting to New World is decreasing these days.”

“Ah, yes. I guess I’ve been busy.”

“Why is your answer like that? You can’t be that busy!”

“No, I really am busy.....”

This had happened when Ark first arrived in Charem. He was inside the pipes at the water facility so he had plenty of time. But Ark knew. Ha Myung-woo seemed to have gone through some difficulties judging by his voice. Once Ark was seated, Ha Myung-woo started to list his complaints.

“There are a various reasons for the number of connections decreasing. There

are various errors every time an expansion pack is released and the development speed is slow so the new content can't match up with the users' level up speed. However, the planning team investigated and came to the conclusion that the biggest reason is that the player's interest has cooled.

If the interest cooled then of course the number of connections would decrease. The 20 people of the planning team were mobilized for an investigation? Did they ever think that the cause of New World's falling numbers was because of the stupid planning team? The words were in his throat but he swallowed them down. When Ark first joined Global Exos' entrance examination, Ha Myung-woo was the person in charge of it. Despite becoming Global Exos' advisor, Ark still found Ha Myung-woo difficult. Anyway, Ha Myung-woo continued talking.

“The planning team worried for a while so we created a new project. These days a massive amount of publicity comes from internet broadcasting. Therefore we have to promote the fantasy game system once again. After having users fill out a questionnaire, the answers came back as ‘Ark.’ Ark is the strongest person in New World so he is the thing that users are most curious about. So the planning team joined with an internet broadcasting company. The name will be ‘Ark, the Legend of that Time’ and it will be a trilogy!”

‘What is he proposing now?’

Ark looked at Ha Myung-woo with irritation. When Ark was initially appointed as the advisor of Global Exos, the users interest exploded and Ha Myung-woo created things like ‘Ark, I am a user’, ‘Ark, the human,’ ‘Ark, behind the legend,’ ‘Ark, where is he going,’ and so on. Now another new project was being launched.....and the name was ‘Ark, the Legend of that Time’? He was being treated as a retired entertainer. However Ark had no right to refuse. The reason Ark could become an advisor for Global Exos was because he obtained the master code and he had responsibilities in New

World. This was also one of Ark's main tasks.

“I understand what you're saying. I'll make some time.”

Ark accepted the suggestion. But the situation in Galaxian suddenly changed and he postponed it until Charem's problem was finally settle yesterday.

‘I might not have time when I move to another place so let's put it in order while I have time!’

This was the reason Ark came to New World.

‘I was a little annoyed when I first heard the news but it is good once I entered. I suffered after fighting the Sufferers for so long in Galaxian so the medieval city has a calming effect. But when are they coming.....’

Ark confirmed the time and looked around.

“You are Ark-nim?”

Two people started approaching him. They were both wearing robes when the woman in front holding a microphone and the man behind holding a magic projector to shoot a video. He was holding a magic projector that cost 50 gold (memory crystal sold separately).

“Yes, I am Ark.”

“That's great. I'm Fufu from African TV and this is Camel.”

“Ah, I've seen you before. Are you a professional newscaster for virtual reality games?”

“That's right. But Ark-nim is much more famous than me. You are New World's strongest gamer and Global Exos' consultant. That is indeed a user's romance. There was a lot of interest from before but this is the first time I saw you directly. We'll take good care of this trilogy.”

The red haired Fufu said with a smile. She looked vaguely like Roco.

“So now what?”

“I’ve heard from Ha Myung-woo that Ark-nim has done a lot of broadcasts before. Yet Ark-nim never talked about the NPCs that helped you become the strongest gamer. This time we want to talk to the people around Ark-nim.”

“The people around.....you mean specifically.....”

“There are a number of people. For example the 7 heroes that helped Ark-nim against Lucifer, Sid who worked with Ark-nim for a long time and is now in charge of the dwarf union, Buksil, Ulmeok, Sapjil, JusticeMan and the rehabilitation members as well as the Meow, raccoons and other beast clans.”

‘That is a long list.’

Once he heard Fufu’s words, he really thought it had been a long time since he entered New World. Then Fufu said with a smile.

“As expected, the thing that users are most curious about is Ark’s summons.”

“Summons?”

“Yes, the colleagues who travelled with Ark-nim from the beginning until you became a legend. Yet they’ve never appeared on any broadcasts. How does Ark-nim’s summons live normally? That is the question that appeared the most in the survey.”

“Summons.....”

Ark scratched his head for a while. Ark also hadn’t seen them for a while. Of course he used to often enter New World. However, he could handle the bugs by himself so he didn’t need to call his summons. No, Ark had the master code so he was like a god in New World. Even if he faced a level 999,999 devil, he could just press ‘Del’ so he didn’t need to call his summons. Therefore it had been 1 year since Ark saw his summons. However, he started to remember his summons after starting Galaxian. He was playing alone so he sometimes missed the days when he travelled with his summons.

‘That’s great. Doesn’t this give me an excuse to see them after a long time?’

“I understand. Then I will summon them right away.”

Ark laughed and nodded his head. Then Fufu shook her head and quickly said.

“No, that’s not it. I told you. The users are wondering what the summons does normally. In other words, we want to go to them.”

“Well that is also okay.”

Ark was anxious when hearing those words. He hadn’t seen them for 1 year so he didn’t know what they were doing.

“I understand. Then I’ll take you to them immediately.”

Ark smiled and took out a lamp from his bag. He rubbed the lamp with his sleeve and a giant rose from it. The giant made of blue smoke kneeled in front of Ark and lowered his head.

*–Master, did you call?*

“Ah, Ark-nim, that is?”

“The genie of the lamp. He is a pretty carefree guy.”

Ark tapped the giant’s knee and laughed. The existence of the master code was still a secret for the general users. It wasn’t possible to announce that a user had control of all of New World. But Ark wasn’t a magician so there would be problems if he suddenly used spatial movement or removed a whole mountain. Therefore Global Exos’ development team quickly create the genie of the lamp after Ark obtained the master code. All the miracles that Ark created with the master code could be blamed on the genie of the lamp. Therefore the ability of the genie was almost unlimited.

“Heok! W-what the hell?”

“Lamp! The genie of the lamp!”

“The genie of the lamp? T-then the person holding the lamp.....”

“Ark! He is the only person in New World who has the genie’s lamp!”

“Wah! Ark! Ark has appeared in Selebrid! Pictures! Take pictures!”

The users in Selebrid started flocking. However Ark didn’t pay attention to the interest of the users.

“Genie, please move me.”

*–Where is the place you desire?*

“Well.....shall we start with that guy? Genie, the destination is Dark Earth. Move Fufu, Camel and I to the Immortal Castle in Dark Earth on Seutandal.”

*–As Master commands!*

Kwaaaaaaah-!

A storm wrapped around Ark, Fufu and Camel.

“T-this is?”

“It is the Immortal Castle on Dark Earth which is the Holy Land of the vampires.”

Ark replied while looking at the city locked in darkness.

Pepeng! Pepeng! Pepeng!

There were successive ringing sounds and dozens of vampires appeared. Wearing red armour and holding various weapons, they were the guards of the Immortal Castle. And.....

*–Who dares trespass on the Immortal Castle?*

An old man shouted from the centre of the guards.

“Hey Lord. It’s been a while. Are you healthy?”

*-What? Damn, is it Ark? I was wondering why it was quiet. I told you the last time you came here. Please don’t just spatially move to the castle. Don’t you*

*know how many cracks appear in the magic barrier every time you use spatial movement? At least use the dragon when coming here.*

The pale, old man sighed and muttered with irritation. Then Fufu asked Ark in an uneasy voice.

“Ark-nim, isn’t that an incredibly scary vampire?”

“Huh? Oh, that old man is the Vampire Lord.”

“Vampire Lord! The King of all vampires that has enough magic to kill a dragon?”

“That’s right.”

Ark shrugged and replied. That’s right. The guards were protecting the Vampire Lord! Like Fufu said, he was the King of all vampires and one of the strongest NPCs in the world. However, Ark had already become friends with the Vampire Lord one year ago. Because he was a god. A vampire with eternal life had nothing against him. Power was the thing that determined ranking. And Ark was a user with the power to match the Vampire Lord. Because he was a god. Anyway, the Vampire Lord was a rare NPC that general users hardly ever saw! Fufu became restless with the appearance of the Lord.

“C-Camel, turn on the camera! Stand-by! Ohhh! Everyone, it is the emergence of a rare NPC! How awesome! The Vampire Lord who is a legend! Look! That disinterested face! The fearsome magic that can be felt even at a distance! He is indeed a monster of monsters!”

*–What? Who is that impolite woman?*

“Don’t worry about something like that. She is with me today.”

Ark clicked his tongue and sighed.

“By the way, where is Curio?”

*–He is in his mansion. Yes, this is good. Please do something.*

“Do something?” What are you saying?”

*–That Curio. I really....he is your summon so I left him along but seeing his actions every day....he really is a young vampire. You should go and see him. You’ll then understand what I’m saying. I’m asking you. Please control him somehow.*

The Vampire Lord said before disappearing with the guards. Curio was one of Ark’s 3 summons. At first he was just a bat but under Ark’s loving (?) care, he grew rapidly until he earned a spot in the Immortal Castle. He was a bit sassy at times but he was a pet that suited Ark.

‘I should control him? What does that mean?’

It didn’t take that long for Ark to get an answer.

“Oh, finally! This is the mansion of Ark-nim’s summon, the vampire Curio. His usual appearance is that of a cute body so he is especially popular among female users but in reality he is a vampire! In addition, he is a high pureness vampire. What kind of life does a vampire like this live? As a vampire, does he sleep in a coffin? Or is he raising his magic in preparation for any upcoming battles? This will now be revealed to the public!”

Fufu relayed while entering the gloomy mansion.

“Kyaaaak!”

A female scream was suddenly heard. He was a vampire so maybe he captured someone to suck their blood! He thought like that for a short time but.....Ark’s face soon warped strangely.

“Kyaaaah, over here! Curio-nim!”

“Hohohoho, try to catch me.”

Barely dressed women were running around the hall while laughing. And chasing after them was a boy who covered his eyes with a towel.

“Hehehehe, you cuties. I’m going to catch you. Ang, I’m going to eat you!”

The body saying such silly words.....

“Curio?”

Ark murmured with an amazed voice.

“Hey! What is this? Who dared invade Curio-nim’s mansion!”

“You rude bastard! I’ll ask again! Don’t make me hurt you! We’re going to hurt you!”

3 bats shouted and flew towards him.

“Ah! Ah! King Master-nim!”

They soon screamed when they saw Ark’s face and hit the brakes. The 3 bats were Curio’s cousin and they followed him once Curio became a lord. There was a time when they believed Ark was lower than Curio but now they were taught that he was the King Master. They didn’t dare be rude to him anymore.

“Why is the King Master here?”

“What is going on here?”

“Ah....I....that....you see.....”

The bats alternating between looking at Curio and Ark who was glaring. In the end they sighed and said.

“Lord-nim has changed.”

“When Lord-nim was still accompanying Ark, he treated his well. But since Lord-nim entered the Immortal Castle.....”

“The Lord-nim we wanted wasn’t like this. We wanted a vampire with the pride of a vampire. However the Vampire Lord just sighs at his actions while other vampires gossip. Huk, having a Lord-nim like this is really embarrassing.”

“Now Lord-nim doesn’t listen to our words anymore. Now he is just living the life of debauchery....huk!”

Ark listened to the bats whine with an amazed expression. Curio who was chasing the girls then embraced Ark.

“Hehehehe, I got you! Kikiki, I’ve decided to pick you tonight. Huh? Isn’t your body quite firm? And why are you dressed in so many layers of clothes? Huhuhuhu, are you embarrassed? This cutie, then I’ll peel it off you personally! Hehehehe!”

And he started groping Ark’s body. It was this. This was the reason why the Vampire Lord sighed. While Ark was spending time in the 24 century, his summon was running around feasting and committing acts of debauchery every night. But.....

“.....You seem to be enjoying yourself huh?”

Ark growled out with anger in his eyes.

“Huh? What? A man’s voice? Eh? Why is a man here? Huh? What bastard are you? Who dared interrupt Curio’s fun....heok! M-Master?”

“I’m sorry I’m a man.”

“W-why is Master here?”

“Why, is there a reason for me not to be here?”

“Ah, no.....that’s not it.....”

“Why? Huh? Why are you sweating? Is there something I shouldn’t notice?”

“Ah, no, that, I mean.....Master....I.....”

Curio broke into a cold sweat and retreated. Then a woman who was watching from behind shouted.

“Hey you! What are you doing? This is my money so what’s the big deal? He might be a summon but he is still a vampire with privacy! You have no right to interfere even if you are his master. In addition, it’s been 3 years in New World and 1 year in reality since you’ve seen him and now you suddenly

show up and act like his Master! He isn't just your pet bat anymore. He is the high pureness vampire of the Immortal Castle! Curio!”

The woman had a lot of bravery. But Curio had forgotten one thing. Who was Ark?

“3 years.....that is certainly a long time.”

Ark nodded before turning around. He looked at Fufu and Camel who were staring blankly and smiled.

“Can you turn off the camera for a while?”

“Huh? Ah, yes!”

*-The broadcast will stop airing for a while thanks to various circumstances. Please be patient.*

After this message played for a few minutes.

“Sob sob, I'm sorry. I went overboard. Please forgive me.”

Curio shed tears as he begged for forgiveness. Curio's face was.....

“M-mosaic! It is a mosaic!”

.....It wasn't necessary to explain the details. It could be guessed just from seeing the reactions of the women trembling in the corner. Ark then took one step towards Curio. Curio's face that had a mosaic stuck to it freaked out and retreated.

“Don't be so astonished. Huh? You're acting like I did something bad.”

“S-something bad? No! Master is a good man!”

“This brat, you sound so natural.....”

Ark shamelessly laughed and said.

“However, I think I was a little wrong. It is my fault for leaving you alone for 3 years. I should still take care of my summons no matter how busy I am. A

high pureness vampire has a lot of money and they also don't age. Furthermore, you have no work so you have a lot of free time. Yes, it's not your fault. The surrounding environment is bad. Isn't that right?"

"You understand?"

"Yes, so I decided to change the environment. You will live like a healthy vampire."

"Huh? C-change the environment?"

He spoke in an uneasy voice. Ark called the genie from the lamp and ordered with a pleasant smile.

"Genie, confiscate all the residences and assets that belong to Curio. And pay him an allowance of 10 silver a month. Can you do that?"

*–Of course!*

Nothing was impossible for the genie of the lamp who was the incarnation of the master code in New World. Once Ark gave the money, there was a swirl of magic and the mansion was taken apart and sucked up. That wasn't all. All the goods and even the money in Curio's pocket was drawn into the swirl of magic. And.....clink. Curio gazed blankly as 10 silver coins fell into his hand.

"How about it? It won't be that hard to live like this right? If you receive 10 silver a month then you don't have to worry about dying of starvation. How about it? Isn't this a good consideration from a master worried about his summons? Aren't you thankful?"

"....."

Curio couldn't answer. He kept looking at the 10 silver coins with a soulless expression.

"Lord-nim, now you can stop that life of debauchery!"

"Yes, we'll help you as well."

“.....”

Curio couldn't answer. He kept looking at the 10 silver coins with a soulless expression.

“Yes.....what a....heart-warming scene.....yes.....it seems to be like that.”

Fufu finished off.

‘This is really embarrassing.....’

Ark glanced at Fufu and inwardly sighed. He was a legendary gamer. Ark was a god in New World. He might've neglected his summons for a while but who knew that Curio would start womanizing? Thinking of such a scene being broadcasted made his face turn red. Ark was his master so wouldn't some people who saw the broadcast also think he was like that?

‘Surely Purital isn't like this as well?’

Ark remembered that he was a reliable summon. He was just a skull when first summoned but Purital soon became a powerful undead lord. There was also one crucial difference between Curio and Purital. Purital was an undead knight. He only remembered that he was a knight so his loyalty to Ark was absolute.

‘Yes, I should be able to restore some of my image if we visit Purital!’

“Genie, the next destination is Oberium the city of the undead!”

He asked the ghosts about Purital after arriving in Oberium.

Clack clack clack clack, clack clack clack clack!

A skeleton was sitting in a dark corner and snapping his teeth. Even without Curio there to interpret for him, he could understand Purital's words thanks to the master code.....

*–Heh, yes. I am not like that. Anyway, I'm a skeleton. I'm only made of bones. It is natural to be abandoned by my Master. Huhuhu, an masterless*

*knight is trash. So I am trash. Why does it matter if I'm alive? Should I just die? Ah, I'm an undead. Huhuhu, yes then I'm undead trash.*

.....This was the content. According to the ghost king of Oberium's words.

*–It started when you hadn't summoned him for a month. Purital kept on repeated the same words over and over in that corner. The undead doctor said that he seems to have depression. Do you know? He might look like that but he has a delicate heart.*

*Even an undead can have a heart.....*

An undead having depression and other symptoms.....There was nothing more to say.

“Ah, Ark-nim?”

“N-not yet! There is still one more left! Genie, the Eastern Nation's castle!”

Ark flew towards the Eastern Nation's castle in Seutandal.

“Omo? Ark-nim?”

He heard a surprised voice once he arrived at the castle. It came from a beautiful woman with glistening black hair and pale skin. She was Isabel who was the head of the assassination group Dark Brother before they were renamed the Eastern Nation. In addition, Isabel was an NPC with an unusual history. She was married to Shambala, a user who was Ark's rival, friend and one of the 7 heroes. No, the unusual thing was that an NPC was married to a user. Unlike Curio and Purital, Ark's last summons had no residence so he left him with Isabel.

“It's been a long time. How have you been?”

“That.....Shambala?”

“He went out for a while. Did you come to meet Shambala-nim?”

“Of course not.”

Ark glanced at Fufu and Camel behind him and said.

“Today I came to see Burning Soul. Where is he?”

“I have him with me. Burning Soul!”

A green snake lifted from her waist after hearing Isabel’s words. This snake was the last of Ark’s summons, Burning Soul! Unlike his other summons, this snake was the one that Ark cherished the most. At first he thought it was a snake but Burning Soul was later revealed to be a Netherworld creature called the Alamone. Once he grew, he managed to transform into a dragon species called Pendragon. Burning Soul regarded Ark as his parent and had never disappointed Ark!.....At least that’s what he thought.....

Swaek swaek? Swaek swaek? Swaek swaek swaek! Swaek swaek swaek!

Burning Soul buried his head in Isabel’s chest as she carried him. He was already disappointed by Curio and Purital so he felt uneasy after seeing Burning Soul’s reaction. But as expected, Burning Soul was different from his other summons.

“Geez, why are you doing this? Take a look. That’s your dad. The dad you’ve been waiting for.”

Burning Soul raised his head again at Isabel’s words. He started at Ark for a while before jumping towards him with tears streaming down. Ark and Fufu sighed with relief and Fufu clamoured.

“Ah, what a poignant scene! If you saw glance at it, this snake seems like something that can eat someone. But this snake is actually Ark’s summon called Burning Soul! It is clear that there is a relationship closer than Master and pet between them!”

“That’s right.”

Ark felt his burden fell thanks to Burning Soul and replied. Now was the same to save a little face. Ark felt better and started opening up.

“It has been shown on public broadcast many times but after his last evolution, Burning Soul can transform into the legendary Pendragon. Genie’s spatial movement isn’t bad but it is nothing compared to flying on Burning Soul.”

“Ohh! Is it possible to see it once?”

“Of course.”

“Ah! Ark-nim, wait a minute. Burning Soul.....”

Isabel stuttered with a startled expression.

“Burning Soul, transform into Pendragon!”

But Ark had already placed Burning Soul down and shouted powerfully. And.....Burning Heart transformed.....but....he was swollen like a big balloon.....

“He is too cute so I feed him every time I see him.....”

Isabel blushed and muttered.

“Ah, Ark-nim. That is Pendragon? Is it different from what we’ve heard.”

“No! It is right! This is Pendragon! Right! Burning Soul, fly!”

Ark got on Pendragon and screamed angrily. He indicated towards the sky and gave a command.

Ting-! Ting-! Ting-!

Burning Soul started running but couldn’t get up in the air to fly. It was already too late to turn around.

‘Don’t turn around! Run! Run until we’re out of sight of the camera!’

Burning Soul ran across the garden but was soon caught by the garden walls.

“Hohoho, how is it? Isn’t he cute?”

Isabel laughed and asked Fufu and Camel. Then she clapped her hands and

laughed.

“Ah! Honey!”

Sprit flashed back in Fufu and Camel’s eyes and they raised their head.

“Among the 7 heroes, there is one who caused a big topic by marrying the NPC Isabel. Shambala! Camel, aim your camera! Let’s get an interview with Shambala!”

Fufu turned around with a happy expression. She ran up to the masked Shambala and said.

“Hello Shambhala-nim. We are Fufu and Camel from African TV. Can you do an interview for a while?”

“Ark?”

Shambala stopped and looked at Burning Soul who was stuck at the wall. He looked back at Fufu and Camel before saying.

“Get lost.”

## After a Long Quest.....

“Ark.....”

The young man spoke in a low voice.

Ting-! Ting-! Ting-!

He gazed at the monitor where a man was running around on a snake shaped like a balloon. It was Ark riding on Burning Soul. The reunion between Ark and his three summons was being broadcasted on the internet and TV in real time. And the young man was watching the broadcast in hospital while undergoing rehabilitation.

“What the, that is?”

“He is the legendary gamer.....”

He could hear people who were watching on the monitor burst out laughing. Ark was called the legendary gamer. It was impossible to get that impression when watching the broadcasted scene. But the youth knew.

‘That is Ark!’

At first the young man had felt the same as other people. Ark looked simple with a few screws loose. However, Ark had risen to a seat that he couldn’t reach. He wasn’t simple. He might be hiding behind that simple appearance but he wasn’t. That’s why the young man wanted to meet Ark. He couldn’t surpass Ark. Why? He was superior in everything so why couldn’t he surpass the simple Ark? In the meantime he had stood on top of a large number of people so why couldn’t he overcome Ark?

‘Why? What am I lacking?’

He asked himself that question hundreds and thousands of times when he lay in a hospital room and couldn’t even lift a finger. But he couldn’t determine

the answer. If the game character's abilities could be quantified in numbers then Ark's would be a lot higher than the youth's. Therefore he wanted the chance to ask. If he requested it of his father then it wouldn't be difficult to meet Ark. However he didn't want to show his current appearance to Ark. A man also had his own pride. If he was going to meet Ark in reality then he wanted to be standing on his own two feet. Even if he meet Ark in that state in reality, he wouldn't be able to get the answer he desired. Ark's talent shone in a virtual reality game. This was the reason why the youth started playing Galaxian.

'But.....'

There was an unforeseen difficulty. He committed a crime in order to personally meet Ark on a disputed planet! However he was sent to Hanan and encountered someone he couldn't face. It was a Rama user called the Red Slaughter.

'Today was the 5th time.....'

That was the number of times he encountered the Red Slaughter on Hanan. And the result was a total failure. He encountered him 5 times and experienced 5 defeats. Several factors affected the outcome of a battle in the game. Apart from level and equipment, Galaxian also had the battle suits. Before meeting the Red Slaughterer, he had experienced death many times.

'The Red Slaughterer is different from other users.'

The Red Slaughterer never once used his battle suit when facing the youth. He didn't use anything except for the most basic skills. Yet the youth still wasn't a match for the Red Slaughterer. It wasn't a mere level difference. He was an experienced gamer so he could distinguish it with the first battle.

'Strong! This guy is strong! This is the power of the person, not the character!'

However, there was a separate reason the youth was interested in the Red

Slaughter. After being killed by the Red Slaughter in combat a few times, he finally heard his words through the federation's interpreter.

*–Until when do I have to face these trivial guys? Is Ark ready yet?*

Since then the youth's target was the Red Slaughterer. He didn't know who he was. Or why he wanted to fight against Ark. But here was another user eager to meet Ark. It was like saying the youth had no right to meet Ark. At that moment, the youth felt like he had to defeat the Red Slaughterer first before meeting Ark. And that was the reality. If he couldn't defeat the Red Slaughterer then Hanan had no chance. He wouldn't be able to return to Istana to meet Ark.

'I need to knock him down with my own hands. And I'm going to meet Ark!'

"Pant pant pant, I'm going to do this!"

The young man gnashed his teeth and raised his body again. He had already been going through rehabilitation for an hour but there was no time to take a break. He needed to be strong. His abilities needed to be strong, not just his character. While the youth was undergoing his rehabilitation.....

"Your son is really motivated today."

"I was worried when he asked to play the virtual reality game but it seems I didn't need to."

His father and doctor were waiting outside.

---

".....Damn."

Ark said with a sigh. He was watching his appearance on the TV. He wasn't an entertainer so he wasn't entirely comfortable with it but he liked to catch his appearance on TV. Yet when he watched it he saw his pet bat harassing women, his skeleton being depressed and his snake was so fat that it had

trouble flying.....

Therefore Ark had been humiliated in front of the whole nation. But Ha Myung-woo's reaction was different.

“That’s it, that’s good. It was what I wanted. In fact, aren’t there a lot of game broadcasts these days? They just show skills and hunting monsters. Therefore the public lost interest in those type of scenes. And isn’t gag the trend these days? Look at how many people are watching it! It is a jackpot. It has only been a few hours and it has already crossed 3 million views. Those 3 million people are probably grabbing their stomachs while rolling with laughter. Congratulations. Until now there had been a lot of stories about bad encounters with you on the internet. After the broadcast, your image has changed to a funny kid. Isn’t that image a lot better? Fortunately the number of connections also increased.”

.....Of course he wasn’t happy at all.

‘I wanted to look good!’

But who would believe him if he said that now? The appearance of the genie in Selebrid evoked admiration from the crowd but if he appeared again then they would probably start laughing.

‘This is the first time I feel more comfortable inside Galaxian than New World.’

Ark scratched his head and looked around. It was a place with large and small buildings filled with aliens. It was no different from other cities but just yesterday this city was under an unidentified biohazard attack that changed corpses into monsters. The city’s name was Charem. And Ark was the one who settled Charem’s problem. Ark didn’t rest in order to settle Charem’s problem but the last day was the most hectic. This was because there were a lot of things to clean up. If Ark tried to sum up all the work he had to do in one day.....

‘What? This atmosphere?’

When Ark exited the power facility. Charem was wrapped in a lot of tension. Marquis Martin and the Aschulat ambassador that looked like ET witnessed Ark fighting the Mumu and signed a tacit truce afterwards. Both sides penetrated Charem’s shield and took care of the remaining Sufferers. However the residents of Charem were still anxious. The atmosphere felt like the federation and Aschulat were able to start a war with Charem in the centre. Of course there was a reason for it.

“I know the situation now.”

Marquis Martin nodded. Ark had explained it after he exited the facility and joined the federation army’s camp.

“There is no doubt that it was a misunderstanding. But it isn’t possible to remove the federation army now. The inner circumstances doesn’t change the fact that Charem is an illegal city. The federation army has already burst into Charem so we can’t pretend we don’t know about it anymore. If we remove the troops then it will be like admitting that the federation endorses smuggling.”

“Is that why the Aschulat isn’t leaving?”

“I guess so.”

Marquis Martin replied in a cold voice.

“But we can’t leave even if a war starts with the Aschulat.”

‘He really is playing around. Who do you think solved Charem’s problem?’

Ark was the one who settled it yet they are fighting amongst themselves. Ark was annoyed that the federation and Aschulat troops were fighting with each other after all his efforts. But that was a separate matter. He sent the GPS information to the federation so he had completed the <Charem’s Infiltration> quest. It didn’t matter if a war started as long as he received the

compensation. However, this wasn't the only quest that Ark received. There was the <Operation to retake the management system> quest that he received after entering Charem. And Ark had to receive that quest reward from Lord Java. If a war started then he couldn't receive the compensation from Java. There were other reasons but.....

'Anyway, I have to somehow stop the war over Charem!'

"I'll be the mediator."

Ark thought for a while before starting to talk.

"You will be the mediator? Do you think you can solve this problem?"

"Yes, I think it can be solved simply if Marquis-nim and the Aschulat ambassador make some concessions."

"What do I need to concede?"

"Leave Charem like it is."

"What?"

"Of course there will be some conditions. This problem is because Charem occupies an area in the federation's territory without permission and illegal smugglers can freely enter or leave. If the federation forcibly suppressed Charem then the Aschulat will become your enemy. There's currently a war against the Rama so this would be a tremendous burden on the federation. Then Marquis Martin won't be able to do anything."

"You're stating the obvious. I already understand the circumstances. Yet you're still me to just withdraw?"

"Is some moral justification necessary?"

"So?"

"You can withdraw if Charem isn't an illegal city anymore. So Charem will come into the open. The galactic federation will manage the city. Of course

the Aschulat won't just give up the rights to Charem. But couldn't the federation call it something like a special, autonomous trading region?"

"Your words are quite cheeky for a mere pioneer."

Marquis Martin sent Ark an unpleasant look and said.

"If that's the case then I can certainly withdraw the troops. However, that means the federation needs to yield to the Aschulat. Did you think I would accept such a proposal?"

"If they receive a gift then shouldn't we get something in return?"

"A gift?"

"I heard that the Aschulat removed their troops for no reason after the Rama war started. Marquis Martin can nominate a condition that they send troops into the battlefield."

"Sending troops to the Bellin battlefields.....!"

Marquis Martin murmured with a surprised expression. He was locked in thought for a moment before asking.

"Do you think the Aschulat ambassador will accept such a request?"

"He will accept."

Ark answered like there was no need to worry about it.

"Why?"

"For the same reason that Marquis-nim will accept my request."

"Hah, don't make me laugh. Why do I need to accept your request?"

"Because of this."

Ark grinned and lifted a small bag. When he received the <Charem's Infiltration> quest, he also received the <Intelligence Agent Kara> sub quest. Ark had been really interested in the contents of this bag while

wandering around Charem. However, the lock on the bag required a higher hacking skill than Ark possessed. Yet he still attempted to open the bag. While he had trapped in the power facility after killing the Mumu, Ark used that time to raise his hacking proficiency. The main items that androids dropped were circuit parts.

```
-#@$!@#!$#!#\$!#\$\$!#!##\$##  
%%%!#\$!
```

The information was part of an unknown program remaining in the circuit. Sometimes the Nympe's memory from someone who suddenly died would become mixed in with the circuit. Of course, most times that information was worthless. Sometimes it contained information about a city or home finances. But sometimes GPS information about new dungeons would be mixed in with that information. The problem was the master of the Nympe.

*-Kara.....recognition code (T-3012).....member of Marquis Martin's intelligence squad.....*

Marquis Martin's intelligence agent Kara! To his surprise, the memory of Kara's Nympe was mixed in with the hacked circuit. The memory contained several pages of Kara's notepad. Ark thought that he might find a clue for the password of the locked bag. And.....bingo!

-Java Work Lv10

Item Type: Destructive Hacking Program

A destructive hacking program used by the galactic federation's special intelligence bureau. If you connect this program to the terminal of a specific system then the Java Work will force the terminal to transmit information to the device. Usually high level security systems attached to the terminal will prevent hacking but Java Work uses physical methods to

extract data from most machines. But if Java Work is used, the system will suffer irreparable damage.

<Forcibly extract information from the target system>

This was the identity of the bag! Ark sensed something after seeing the contents of the bag.

‘Now I understand. This is why Marquis Martin hid the contents of the bag from me despite asking me to sneak into Charem. Marquis Martin wasn’t interested in why Charem cut off contact with the federation. No, he actually thought it was a chance. Charem is a lawless city but it is actually similar to an information base for the Aschulat. Therefore the federation could obtain a lot of information about the Aschulat and Rama from Charem. There is also the information about the various contraband goods traded. If all that information enters Marquis Martin’s hands.....’

Marquis Martin could grasp Charem’s weaknesses. The person who controlled Charem could spread out throughout the galaxy. This was the true reason why Marquis Martin didn’t give up despite the threat of a war. If Marquis Martin obtained the data stored in Charem’s central system then he could blackmail the Aschulat and Rama.

ET also knew this and was 100% not going to give up.

Marquis Martin immediately turned pale when he was shown the bag.

“How did you open that bag.....did you.....?”

“There is no data about Charem.”

When he opened the bag both groups were already confronting each other over control of the tower. But he could use the contents of the bag even if there was no data on it.

“Won’t it be a problem if the Aschulat discover that you wanted to deliver

this to Kara who already infiltrated Charem?”

“Are you threatening me?”

Marquis Martin was indeed very quick at understanding his words. Ark just sat without talking and Marquis Martin narrowed his eyes at him.

“....What do you want?”

In fact, this was the most difficult part for Ark. He obtained an item that he could blackmail Marquis Martin with. Couldn't he obtain some pretty good things from it? The idea that popped into his head was money. Ark soon shook his head. The other person wasn't a user but an NPC. There was a limit to how much he could ask even if he grasped the weakness. Moreover, the person was an influential noble in the galactic federation so it was foolish to turn their relationship hostile. There was a limit to how much users could get from NPCs. If he didn't squeeze too much then he could maintain a good relationship with the NPC. That was Ark's cardinal rule. Besides, Java Work didn't contain any data so he actually had nothing. Marquis Martin was confused but if he gave him too much time to think then he would calm down.

‘I'll also receive the quest reward soon so there is no need to make the appreciation drop.’

“I just want to mediate freely.”

“Hrmm.....”

Marquis Martin looked at Ark before sighing.

“Okay. If the Aschulat promise to send troops to the Bellin constellation to support us then I will agree. The Aschulat also has to accept from their side.”

It was easier to persuade ET than it was Marquis Martin. This was because the Aschulat would 100% lose if there was a battle over Charem. The federation would get their hands on Charem. But if the Aschulat accepted the

offer then Charem would change from an illegal city to an autonomous trade region. And the problem of the support army for the Bellin constellation.....

*–Charem was actually the reason that we withdrew the troops. We thought the federation was the reason why Charem suddenly cut off contact. But we couldn't question it at the diplomatic meeting because officially Charem isn't associated with the Aschulat. It isn't difficult to send reinforcements now that we know it was a misunderstanding.*

That was ET's words. Thus the negotiations were a success! Once Marquis Martin and ET shook hands and signed the agreement, an information window appeared on his Nymphe.

-You have received the title of <Mediator>.

You have managed to persuade Marquis Martin and the Aschulat ambassador and stopped the battle that originated from a misunderstanding. Therefore Marquis Martin and the Aschulat ambassador have given you the title of Mediator. This title will be recognized in both the galactic federation and the Aschulat.

You have also received the recognition of the Aschulat ambassador. This means you are qualified to access the constellations until the control of the Aschulat. You have also resolved Charem's problem and can receive various conveniences in Charem.

<Title Effect: Mediator (Wisdom +15, Intelligence +15)>

+ 1,000 additional fame. + 500 contribution to the Galactic Federation and the Aschulat is obtained.

+ 30% discount when using various services in Charem.

+ Qualified to access Aschulat controlled planets.

This was the first compensation that Ark obtained. And the second was the

quest rewards. He could receive compensation for the two main quests <Charem's Infiltration> and <Operation to retake the management system>. And Ark was already thinking about the rewards for those quests.

“Now, speaking of the successful mission.....”

Marquis Martin brought it up first after they finished negotiations with ET. Ark's eyes flashed and he said.

“Money! Please give me money!”

By default users could select the quest reward in Galaxian. But there was only one choice for him. Money! In the game he would sometimes encounter a quest item he didn't like or it was an item he couldn't use. He would have no choice but to sell it at auctions. Therefore Galaxian had a money system to avoid this hassle. Of course, the compensation matched the value of the item.

“I don't want to go through the trouble of returning to Nabe so I prefer this.”

Therefore he received 1,250 gold! In fact 1,250 gold was a large amount for a quest reward. It was well beyond the price of the current top rated item traded and was probably the highest amount received from a single quest reward.

‘Of course I could've received an item worth 1,250 gold but.....’

Right now Ark needed money.

+ *30% discount when using various services in Charem.*

That was something he received with the title. It wasn't applicable to items bought in Charem. It was applied to services provided by Charem such as the Star Gate or Fairy. But Ark had an item the moment he saw it.

‘Agent registration certification!’

Ark's primary goal was the agent registration! When Ark checked, the price to purchase an agent registration right in the galactic federation was 27,000 gold. However, he could receive a 30% discount from all services provided in Charem. In other words, he could save 8,100 if he bought the agent

registration right in Charem. The final price was 18,900 gold. And Ark currently had 17,400 gold.

‘Now Marquis Martin gave me 1,250 gold! 18,650 gold! I only need 250 gold! I still need to receive the quest reward by Java so I can purchase it immediately! And there’s also the money from selling all my japtem obtained from Charem!’

In fact, buying an agent registration certificate in an illegal city meant nothing. However he negotiated with both parties and now Charem was a special autonomous trade region. If he registered in Charem then he would receive the same benefits as registering with the federation. And the cost of registering was 30% cheaper! His goal was right around the corner! Ark’s heart jumped at the idea. Since Java’s quarters in the control tower was still being repaired, Ark headed towards Java’s temporary lodging.

“Hey, Alan!”

Then he suddenly heard a familiar voice. He turned and saw Clark and Pureah approaching.

“Phew, why are you wandering around so much? We’ve been looking for you for a while.”

“Did you come to receive the compensation from Java?”

“We previously signed a contract so it had been settled. However the control tower isn’t functioning yet so the short distance gates isn’t working. Since the city has been closed for a while, the merchants are having problems with delivery. The Aschulat are sending several transport ships so we are also leaving. We wanted to say goodbye before leaving.”

“You’re leaving right now? Why all of a sudden.....?”

“Haven’t you heard yet? Marquis Martin and the Aschulat made an agreement a short while ago after some negotiations. We heard that the pioneer called Ark who became a major war hero on Beltana was the

mediator.....he doesn't seem ordinary if he was able to negotiate with both sides. Are you from the federation too? Have you seen the person called Ark?"

"No, I....."

Ark scratched his head and hesitated. Clark and Pureah still knew Ark as Alan. Charem was designated the autonomous trade region so there was no reason to hide his identity now. In fact, he felt bad that he was deceiving them. However he hid his identity so there would be issues if he revealed it.

'The problem is the Hyde Helmet.'

It was good at hiding his identity but the intimacy would drop to 0 with the NPCs the moment he took it off. The intimacy for 'Alan' would be wasted.

'Still, if I want Clark and Pureah to join me.....'

He didn't want to waste all the intimacy he gained. He just didn't know if Clark who was a Rama could accept his identity. The federation was the reason Clark was leaving Charem.

"Either way, Charem is now affiliated with the federation. Even if it is an autonomous trade region, the federation and Rama were at war so Java couldn't allow hostile species to freely access it. It is unlikely that I will ever come back. Kalbern is also dead and the Phoenix squad disbanded so there is no reason to remain."

'Well, I guess but.....'

He discovered this after defeating the Mumu but the Phoenix members weren't pioneers. That was normal. Ark was sent to Beltana and lived with NPCs that were pioneers but only 0.1% of NPCs were actually pioneers. No matter how strong the remaining 99.9% were, it was the end if they died. This was the reason that the galactic federation and 4 large companies gave users and pioneers special treatment. They had an immortal body and could face the risks on the space frontier. It was the reason Ark wanted to create the

Royal Guards! NPC pioneers were rare NPCs. Just as Ark was thinking this. “Unfortunately it can’t be helped. I’m proud to be a member of the Phoenix squad. And we are the remaining 3 members of the Phoenix squad. That fact won’t change no matter where we go in the galaxy. Even if we become enemies on the battlefield, I will still regard you as fellow soldiers. So you shouldn’t forget me.”

“Yes, I won’t forget.”

“Thank you.”

Clark laughed and nodded his head.

“Then I’ll see you next time. Let’s meet again one day.”

Clark and Pureah said goodbye and joined up with the crowds. He couldn’t keep going with NPCs who weren’t Royal Guard members but he felt somewhat lonely as they walked away. But he didn’t have time to be depressed!

“I received quite a bit in the meantime. Character information window!”

Character Information Window			
<b>Name</b>	Ark (R-02788)	<b>Level</b>	79
<b>Species</b>	Human	<b>Occupation</b>	Pioneer
<b>Fame</b>	5,820	<b>Adventure</b>	720
<b>Health</b>	1,850 (+90)	<b>Mental Power</b>	1,000 (+75)
<b>Strength</b>	180 (+23)	<b>Agility</b>	25
<b>Stamina</b>	335 (+18)	<b>Wisdom</b>	20 (+5)
<b>Intelligence</b>	160 (+15)	<b>Luck</b>	35

\* Title

Cleaning Foreman (Agility + 3)

Ignorant Destroyer (Wisdom -10, Strength +7, Stamina +7)

Beltana's Hero (Strength, Agility, Stamina, Wisdom, Intelligence, Luck +3)

Mediator (Wisdom, Intelligence +15)

\*\* Contribution: Galactic Federation 6,850, Aschulat 500

\*Body Coating: Survivor

- + Environmental adaptation increases by 50% due to the Survivor coating.
- + The Survivor coating reduces the drop rate of Satiety by 30%.
- + The Survivor coating will reduce fall damage by 50%.
- +The 'Clairvoyance' effect of the Survivor coating is applied.

Of course! His depressed mood flew away at the sight of the information window. Ark had been level 67 when he arrived in Charem. And now he was level 79! Now was his 5th day in Charem so he had gained 12 levels in 4 days. That was an average of 3 levels a day. He could also gather the money for the agent registration rights soon! But was that all? The items he got from the control tower and the Mumu! The Murat's pyramid! His Mediator title! He already received a lot of compensation. There was no reason for him to be depressed.

“There’s no time. I still have a lot of work to do. The quest reward from Java, the agent registration.....and contacting the Royal Guards. Huhuhu, I’ll surprise them after the agent registration is complete. And it took me a while to reach here so shouldn’t I look around? Ah, I also need to find the missing octopuses and report back to Elder Bakum. And Milan! If I decrypt the letters on the slab then I might find a new Murat ruin!”

There were still a lot of things for him to arrange. It wasn’t the time to be playing around.

“Let’s go! GO! GO! GO!”

Ark shouted vigorously as he ran across Charem.

---

“That Ark.....”

After the negotiations with ET were concluded. Marquis Martin sat in the control room of his cruiser and laughed.

“I covet that guy the more I see him.”

Marquis Martin didn’t feel bad about Ark suddenly blackmailing him. No, he actually appreciated Ark even more. In fact, Marquis Martin also thought about negotiations when ET was opposing him. Like Ark said, they were in a war with the Rama so it was stupid to antagonize the Aschulat. But Ark solved that problem while he was worrying about it. However his evaluation of Ark increased due to different reasons.

‘He isn’t greedy. He works hard and isn’t greedy.’

Ark could request anything other than negotiations when threatening Marquis Martin. Marquis Martin wouldn’t accept any unacceptable proposal. And if Ark informed Aschulat of the contents of the bag then he would have no way to appease them. Ark also knew this fact. However, he only asked to do the

negotiations so Marquis Martin's favourable impression of him increased. It seemed easy but it wasn't as simple as it looked.

'He can be quite useful.'

Marquis Martin was thinking such thoughts.

"Marquis-nim, we are receiving communication from the central government!"

"The central government? I've already sent them the report about the negotiation with the Aschulat.....connect."

Marquis Martin turned and saw the form of someone from the central government.

"What is going on?"

*-That.....*

The official hesitated for a while before saying.

*-20 minutes ago we received a report that the Rama have captured Hanan.*

"So it turned out like that....."

Marquis Martin's expression didn't change. When considering the military situation, it was something easily predicted.

"Understood. I will return to the central government after I arrive back in Nabe. I will listen to the report there."

*-And.....*

"There is still more to report?"

*-Shortly after the war ended, the Rama on Hanan sent us this video.*

The screen changed after the official finished talking. It was the smouldering ruins of the federation's base on Hanan. At first he couldn't understand the intent of the video. But after watching for a while, he noticed that the

placement of the federation bodies were strange. It was like it was purposely arranged.....

The bodies formed a series of letters. Someone used the corpses to send a message to the federation. Surprisingly the message was.....

*I'm sending a challenge to Ark.*

*The Red Slaughterer.*

“What the, this is?”

Marquis Martin's face warped.

TO BE CONTINUED