## Ark Vol 17 C 4

Chapter 4

ACT 4 Dragonian

"Character information window!"

Character Name Ark Race Human Alignment Good +500 Fame 2,365 (+500) Level 374 Profession Dark Soul Title Cat Knight, Caretaker of the People, Jackson's Hero, Great Adventurer, Magic Institute Member, Seutandal's Hero Health 7015 (+425) Mana 7205(+225) Spiritual Power 786 Strength 757 (+38) Agility 957 (+110) Stamina 1197 (+35) Wisdom 173 (+10) Intelligence 1265 (+5) Luck 167 (+60) Flexibility 181 Art of Communication 69 Affection 49 (+10) Resilience 439 Dark Fog 36 Special stat: Knowledge of Ancient Relics 153 \* Equipment item effects Guardian Armour of the Merpeople: Water Attribute Resistance +100%, Penalty based on water is nullified.

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

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

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

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

Galgashi's Fur (Mantle): Cold resistance +100%, Agility +20, When health is less than 50%, 'Magic Protection' automatically activates.

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

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

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

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

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

- \* All abilities will increase by 50% in the dark
- \* You have the ability to hide in the darkness (30 minutes duration. Cancelled when you get into combat)
- \* Resistance to Fear, Darkness, Blind, and Seduction spells is increased by 50%.
- \* You can bring out the true abilities from all types of tools.
- \* Shock absorption is increased by 20%.
- \* Poison resistance has increased by 50%.
- \* 10% increased attack and defense.

Ark smiled with satisfaction as he checked the information window. It had been one week since he entered the chaos space. He had reduced his sleeping hours to 3~4 hours a day and continued eating the wendigoes. The wendigoes were level 300~350. Since the level 370 Ark was fighting the wendigoes with an average level of 320, he didn't receive a lot of experience. Even when he hunted the wendigoes that were level 350, he only received 60% of the experience. After hunting for a week, he fortunately managed to gain 3 levels.

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Ark's goal was to raise his Spiritual Power! And the result was a great success. He managed to gain an enormous extra 380 Spiritual Power. After seeing the results of his efforts in the information window, a giggle escaped.

"Huhuhuhu, 786 Spiritual Power..... Did you see? This is it! Now I can use the Ghost Knight Corps and Area Declaration skill! Huhuhuhu, hahaha.....ugh!"

Ark suddenly felt dizzy and stumbled.

Clack? Clack clack clack!

Razak who had been watching approached with anxiety. And sighed as he looked at Ark with pitying eyes. Right now Ark wasn't in a position to be energetic. His eye sockets were so hollow they looked like something on a dead person. Cheekbones protruded from his face. His skin was tight and dehydrated. Ark had become a perfect mummy after one week. The reason Ark looked like that.....

"Oh, Master. Don't force it too much. Well, it was my pleasure."

Racard folded up the many layers of fat on his stomach and spoke. Racard's appearance was the complete opposite from Ark's. His face was greasy and his stomach was so fat that it wobbled as he moved. Yes, it was him. He was the culprit who turned Ark into a mummy. For the past week, Racard had sucked Ark's blood in order to use Moonlight Illusion. Even though he ate the stamina tonics, it was ineffective in recovering his physical strength. Racard absorbed energy from the blood and the result was the fat stomach. Therefore Ark was skin and bones from the malnutrition and lack of blood while Racard was obese and stuffed full of nutrition from the abuse of his Blood-sucking skill.

"It can't be helped. Moonlight Illusion is needed to hunt a lot of wendigoes. And as planned, I managed to raise my Spiritual Power by 380. But, but.....'

"Now all the wendigoes are dried up. How regretful! Right Master?"

He felt his spirit darken as he listened to Racard's words. However, Racard had now 100% grasped Ark's personality. Because after sucking the blood so many times, he confirmed that there would be 'absolutely no retaliation.' No matter what he did, Ark wouldn't change his attitude because he needed Racard.

'Dammit, my summons are getting smarter and more ambitious as time goes by.'

Although Ark initially beat his pets for no reason, now that their heads became smarter he couldn't beat them for no reason or else there would be backlash. If he wanted to discipline them then he always needed a new reason and that wasn't easy.

'Well, now that Racard is like this......

Ark looked at the pieces of land floating around him. For example, if a monk at a temple developed a taste for meat then wouldn't he have to leave? After hunting for Spiritual Power through the week, he had managed to navigate through all the floating lands and killed the wendigoes. Fortunately the wendigoes were now gone like Racard said a short while ago.

"Now there's only the quest left?"

For the past week Ark hadn't even been thinking about the quest. If he freed the souls of the Fire Draconians inside Dragonian then the chaos space might reset to its original state. If that happened then the wendigoes which were dragged inside would also disappear. Therefore Ark wanted to maintain the chaos space even if he had to give up the quest. But after one week, he confirmed that the wendigoes didn't respawn anymore. He had no choice but to complete the quest.

"There are no more wendigoes here. Let's finish this."

Ark recuperated using food and headed to his destination. Moving through the floating pieces of land in the chaos space wasn't a problem for Ark anymore. At the first the land masses seemed to move erratically but after a while he realized that they moved in patterns. Just like planets orbiting the sun, they flowed around a central point. That point was right in the middle of the chaos space!

"There!"

Ark looked at the huge object occupying one of the land masses. It was the huge dome he saw at the top of Hwaryong Mountain. At the heart of the chaos space was a semicircle of stone arches which seemed to resemble a mountainous place. The only difference from the outside dome was that this one was formed out of rocks. The size was approximately 4~5 kilometres in diameter. It was also half submerged in lava.

"This must be Dragonian!"

Ark moved to the land mass and arrived at the stone mountain. It formed a dome but the surface was made out of rock so there was no concern about slipping.

"My guess is that the entrance should be somewhere here......"

Ark crawled around the rock surface and examined it. Everything in the chaos space rotated around this location so it had to be the right place. If Dragonian was here then it must be inside this huge rocky mountain. Therefore there must be a passage to enter the rocky mountain. But after searching around for 3 hours with Racard, he couldn't find a passage inside the rocky mountain.

'That's strange? No matter how much I think, shouldn't this place be Dragonian?'

Ark scratched his head with confusion.

Ku ku ku ku. Puswiiiiii!

"What, what the?"

Suddenly the mountain started shaking roughly and the ground where Ark was sitting split open. In the ensuring blast, a powerful suction force surrounded Ark's body and he was sucked in.

"Waaaaah"

Ark screamed as he was sucked into the darkness.					
Syuuuuuuck, kung!					
-The ability of the Cat Knight has reduced the fall damage by 50%Thanks to your flexibility, the fall damage has been reduced by 40%.					
There was a tingling from the impact and the message window appeared. After hitting the ground, Ark hurriedly raised his head and looked around.					
"Huk, what, what the? This is?"					
The place where Ark fell was a ruin. Debris from the broken fort and buildings were scattered around. But the fort and building wreckage wasn't ordinary. The bricks scattered around were huge and one surviving door was dozens of metres high.					
"I've found it. This is the city of Dragonian where the Fire Draconians lived!"					
Ark instinctively perceived that he had found the place he was looking for. The Fire Draconians was a species 20 metres high. It was natural for their residence to be huge. The door dozens of metres high was proof that the Fire Draconians lived here.					
"You bastard!"					
Suddenly a huge roaring sound shook the dome. A huge shape showing its fangs looked down at Ark. The shape was a mix of lizard and human and resembled Valderas and Lumines. But the form of the monster wasn't ordinary. Here and there on the bodypieces of rotten skin peeled off and revealed the bones. And the gaping wounds were maggot infested.					
'What's with this guy?"					

"I found you, you evil bastard!"

The monster sucked in a deep breath and blew out. Deep red flames came pouring out from that guy's mouth. Ark freaked out and rolled along the ground to avoid the damage. The monster followed after him.

Bang, bang, bang, bang!

Deep footprints were imprinted into the ground wherever it stepped. One hit would be a critical attack!

'But it is slow!'

Ark rolled along the ground and through the legs of the monster. That area was the largest blind spot of a big monster. As expected, the monster panicked and stepped back. Ark quickly stood up and used Dark Dance. With the monster's slow attacks, it couldn't catch Ark who was using Dark Dance. Ark managed to get some distance away from it and stared.

'When looking at those abominable features, that guy is definitely Magura's subordinate. Although I was slightly confused at first, now I'm more comfortable. Its attacks are powerful but it is a slow monster so it won't be a difficult opponent for me. Fortunately I didn't receive a lot of fall damage so I should have no difficulty if a boss appears.'

"Razak, Racard, get ready!"

Ark drew his sword and ordered Razak and Racard to get ready.

"Racard, the opponent is slow. Attack his occipital nerves to disturb that guy! Razak, his attack power is huge. It is impossible for you to block his attacks with your shield head on. Attack its legs from the side to stop its movements!"

"Heh, this fight will be simple. Shall I work off some of this fat? Kuaak!"

Clack clack clack clack clack!

Racard started flying while his belly fat continued talking while Razak easily ran forward. Ark also
grabbed his sword firmly with both hands and moved to his position. The monster in the centre while
Ark and Razak flanked its side and Racard was behind. It was their regular triangle formation.

"Now, shall we start?"

Ark took an attacking stance and prepared to begin his attacks.

Thump, thump, thump!

Suddenly the ground shook like an earthquake was occurring. Racard's scream could be heard from behind the monster.

"M-Master, over there!"

"What....what the? That is?"

Ark turned around and instinctively stiffened. There was a dust cloud on the hill opposite Ark from 10 monsters running forward. The monsters had huge rotting bodies while holding a spear and mace! No matter how slow they were, he couldn't handle 10 monsters at the same time. But that wasn't the reason why Ark was confused.

'Aren't they? But.....huk, don't tell me?'

"Eyes of the Cat!"

Ark thought something was abnormal and used Eyes of the Cat on the monsters.

'T-this.....! No way...... Then these guys are.....?'



Ark thought back to the situation just now. Just before attacking Ark, the Fire Draconian said that it had finally 'found the devil.' It was impossible for it to say that if the devil was controlling it. That meant
'I need to check this!'
"You guys wait here for a while."
Ark found a suitable hiding spot for his summons and used Stealth. Then he went inside Dragonian. Dragonian was located inside the stone dome which only had a diameter of 4~5 kilometres. After checking every corner, Ark managed to sneak into a gathering of Fire Draconians. The Fire Draconian souls that attacked him just then were gathered in the centre of the ruins. He approached closely and listened to them talk.
"Was he really the devil?"
"But was the devil that small?"
"Um I don't know. I don't remember. I just feel this awful gnawing sensation on my soul. And my memory Aside from the devil, now I can't even remember my name All I can remember is my vengeful feelings towards the devil."
"It doesn't matter what the devil looks like. We're trapped in a place where only the devil can enter. If there are any existences other than us then that person is the devil."
"Yes. He must be the devil. We have to find him before even our vengeful feelings become blurred.
"But it is dangerous if we scatter to look for him. If he is the devil then we absolutely can't defeat him by ourselves. Let's find him altogether."
The spirits of the Fire Draconians buzzed noisily and rushed out of the area.

'It is like I guessed.'

Now Ark was sure of his reasoning. Dragonian was a large area with its own clouds and valley. However the structure wasn't that complicated. It wasn't a place where someone could spend time hiding. Despite the Fire Draconians sweeping through every corner, they could only find their own presences.

'Clearly the souls of the Fire Draconians have a hostile relationship with the devil. But they said they 'found' it when they saw me. That fact that I was mistaken as the devil meant they haven't discovered his location yet. However, Dragonian was inside a stone dome and it had limited space. Dragonian has been in this situation for hundreds of years. The fact that the Fire Draconians haven't found the devil yet...... Yes, it is indeed like Lumines said.'

Ark now started to realize the meaning of Lumines' words. Lumines had said that Magura hid himself after deceiving the Fire Draconians. The souls of the Fire Draconians were bound to the devil but they couldn't find him. Lumines mentioned that Magura had a large body which meant that the devil looked similar to the souls of the Fire Draconians. Ark hid himself while searching around Dragonian to confirm his theory.

'Then all the souls of the Fire Draconians are currently searching for the devil?'

Ark looked with amazement at the souls of the Fire Draconians. While it was difficult to separate them, he could see approximately 30 of them. It was impossible to figure out if one of them was the devil just by the appearance.

'I don't know if you've ever gotten ... the end. '

Ark already firmly believed that the devil was among the Fire Draconians. According to the Fire Draconians' words, no presences other than the devil could enter here. No, the devil was also mixed among them so couldn't resolve the misunderstanding. If Ark showed himself then they would attack without asking any questions. Just as he was thinking that.

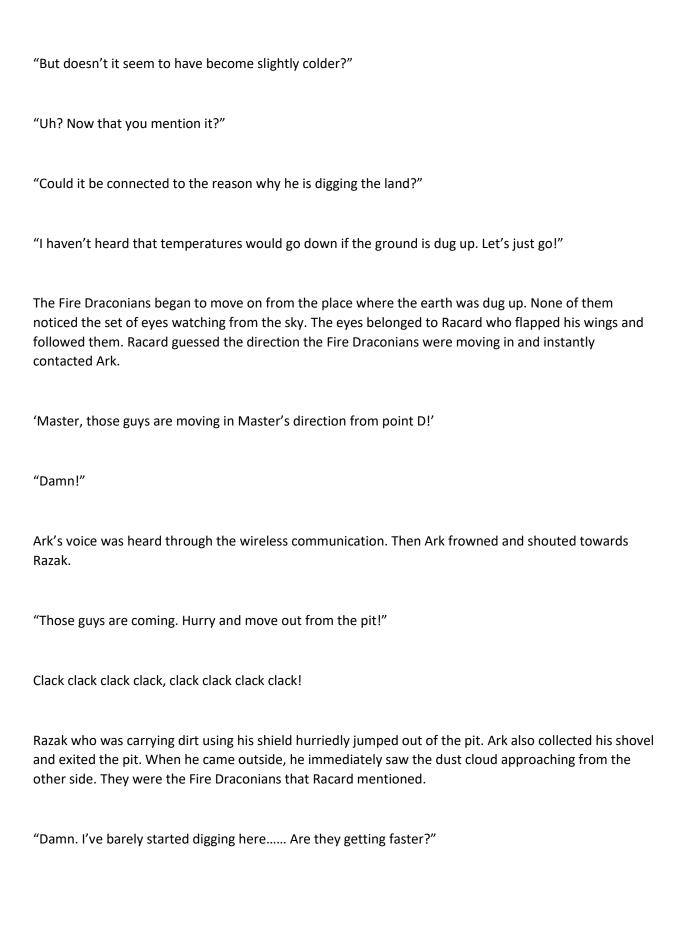
-A part of your ability was absorbed by an unknown presence.

\* Once you find the cause of the absorption, you can take back the removed abilities. \* If you die before taking back the ability then the absorbed ability will disappear forever. "Huk, what it this?" Ark freaked out as he checked the information window. The status window said that some of his stats had decreased? Ark then realized that the situation was more serious than he thought. "Damn! What on earth is going on?" The devil hiding here had the power to gnaw on souls. That was why the Fire Draconians lost their memories and changed to that horrible appearance. Then it also had the power to take away Ark's abilities. But right now Ark was using Stealth. How was he found by the devil.....? Anyway, now wasn't the time to be thinking such things. "Before it is too late, I have to find the devil and defeat him!" However, Ark didn't know how he came in here. Then the only way was that the devil pulled him in here. "If I die then my lost stats will permanently disappear! If the devil controls all those Fire Draconians......"

The devil could just hide while controlling those guys. If he killed the souls of the Fire Draconians then he would definitely fail the quest. However, the quest wasn't the problem anymore. If he lost a bunch of stats then what use was the compensation? But the problem wasn't that simple. Of course, the Fire Draconians already had a lot of their power taken away by the devil so they were weaker. However there were 30 of them. Moreover, one of them was the devil. In other words, he had to fight against the boss monster and 29 Fire Draconians.

'The problem is those guys are going together.' This method he used to take care of the wendigoes needed at least 10 opponents. But it was impossible no matter how he thought about it. Those guys

were slow but they stayed together and could use their fire for ranged attacks. If only there was a way to expose the devil from the Fire Draconians'
Then something popped into Ark's head.
'Wait? Didn't the Fire Draconians have a weakness?'
Ark raised his head and surveyed the area. After thinking for a while, Ark's eyes started sparkling.
"Maybe No, with this there is a much higher possibility of winning against the Fire Draconians. Okay, this is it. There's no choice. I have to try this!"
"Uh? This place?'
The souls of the Fire Draconians looked down and frowned.
On the floor pits were open like rats had chewed on it. It wasn't only here. Since he started, Ark had already dug up over 10 places in Dragonian.
"What on earth is that guy thinking?"
"I don't understand, is he hoping that we'll fall into the holes?"
"Surely he isn't that stupid He's obviously arranging something."
"He fooled our eyes for hundreds of years. I don't know when he'll begin hiding again so we have to find him quickly. Hurry!"



Ark complained as he ran in the opposite direction. Yes, it was unnecessary to say but Ark was the one going around digging holes in Dragonian. He was digging in order to find a weapon to reveal the devil!

'If I find it then there is a 100% chance of revealing the devil. Once the devil is revealed, there is no reason to fight against the Fire Draconians. No, the Fire Draconians would probably end up helping me against the devil.'

So Ark assigned Racard to watch the Fire Draconians movements while going around digging the ground. But to be honest, this method was a gamble. There was no guarantee that he would find 'it' inside Dragonian or that he would be able to trap the devil in it. And he hadn't found any trace of 'it' yet even after working a couple of days.

"Well, at least I found an unexpected treasure while digging....."

Ark pulled out a red gem similar to a ruby from his pocket. It was a Hearthstone that Ark discovered when he first started digging. After shovelling at the land for a while, a small stone had appeared.

"Eh? T-this!"

-Fire Stone (Hearthstone)

A hearthstone that has absorbed magic for a long time while under the earth. It isn't uncommon in New World to find mysterious stones that can absorb the magic around it. The nature of the stone would change depending on where it is buried. A stone buried near the volcano would absorb a fire attribute while a stone buried near a snowy mountain would absorb an ice attribute. A stone which has taken on such attributes are called Hearthstones.

This Hearthstone has absorbed an aura of fire. If the Fire magic is absorbed incompletely then it will explode when receiving an impact. Players mainly use it as a combustion magic ingredient or it can be used as a bomb. In addition, it will give a mysterious power to items when inserted in a socket.

## "Hearthstone!"

Ark shouted with joy as he found an unexpected item. Of course the flame stone itself didn't have great stats. But there was a reason Ark cheered when he found the Hearthstone. In fact, while travelling Ark had been digging at the ground after setting up campsites. After being captured by Karakul and forced to do hard labour, he discovered it was possible to find japtem while using 'Excavation' to dig the land. But Ark's purpose wasn't finding japtem. To be honest, if he wanted japtem then it was easier to find them while hunting. Ark continued digging in order to find a massive treasure! He only used 'Excavation' to find that treasure. The Hearthstone! Yet he hadn't found anything despite his persistent efforts....... Hearthstones were generally excavated in a place which a strong power, in orders words a power spot. And this place had been sealed up for hundreds of years! In other words, the power of fire which couldn't be released for hundreds of years had accumulated in the ground.

'That's right. Why didn't I think of that? Hwaryong Mountain has some of the most powerful magic on the condition so of course the conditions to create a Hearthstone would be right. Then....!"

Ark took out a small stone from his bag. While digging everywhere, he had sometimes found an empty Hearthstone. The reason Ark hadn't thrown them away and carried them around was because he had the chance to turn them into real Hearthstones. Ark inserted the empty Hearthstone in the place where the Fire Stone emerged. Then he pulled out the Phantom Hourglass and used it.

"Maximum acceleration!"

Then the sand at the top started to fall at a tremendous speed. Ark waited until all the sand had fallen to the bottom. The empty Hearthstone was filled with sudden power. If it was incomplete then it would change into the Fire Stone. But instead of becoming a Fire Stone, it became a Hearthstone with a red tint.

"It's a success!"

Ark lifted the Hearthstone and investigated the information window.

-Explosion Stone (Rare Hearthstone)

It is a Hearthstone which has absorbed the heat of Hwaryong Mountain for hundreds of years. Hwaryong Mountain is a sacred place which has contains the energy of fire. This Hearthstone which has absorbed the power of Hwaryong Mountain contains one of the stronger fire energy in the world. A Hearthstone which has absorbed this much power can be found once in hundreds of years. It can be used as a deluxe magic ingredient and went inserted into a socket, the item will display a special quality.

A rare Hearthstone! The rare Hearthstones only appeared once in several hundred years! A 33% chance of causing 50-100 fire damage! Furthermore, when the effect was exercised then all enemies within 5 metres in front of him would receive 50-100 fire damage. The Explosion Stone had an enormous effect which suited its name. When the rare Hearthstone absorbed the surrounding power, the area instantly felt like it had become colder.

"I found a rare Hearthstone with fire power! All this is worth it just for the rare hearthstone."

Of course he would insert the Rare Hearthstone into the Promised Sword. And the Fire Stone was a consumable so he could also sell it at the auction and make quite a good amount of money. He once again packed the Hearthstone in his bag with a proud feeling.

'This definitely feels like a bonanza.'

However, the message which appeared next poured cold water on his happy mood.

-A part of your ability was absorbed by an unknown presence.

"Damn, again!"

Ark's face which had been remembering the happy memory distorted. For the last two days, Ark had his stats absorbed dozens of times a day. During this time, the amount of stats he lost was equivalent to losing 50 levels! Ark's summons also had their stats disappear.

"I really don't have time anymore. If I lose any more stats then there is no guarantee I can win against the devil. If I can't find 'that' by the end of the day then I'm screwed!"

The cornered Ark hurriedly rushed to the next place and began shovelling. Thanks to his digging while travelling, his Excavation skill was currently at the Advanced level. The shovel dug at the soil every time he swung it. Razak also used his shield to help dig and even Radun swallowed the earth before throwing it away somewhere else. After Ark and his summons were digging awhile, a large puddle formed. However, Ark still hadn't recovered 'it.' Ark released the shovel and started thinking.

'Was I mistaken? Is 'that' really here?'

Even if 'it' was 100% here, there was still a problem. Dragonian was a limited space but it was still 4-5 km in diameter. It was impossible to dig and find it with just one shovel. And the more time dragged on, the more the devil would absorb his abilities.

'I made a mistake. From the beginning it was a gamble with a low rate of success.'

He should've fought the Fire Draconians when his stats were absorbed the first time. Even if he had to give up the quest to escape from Dragonian, it was better than dying and losing his stats. But now he had stats equivalent to 50 levels absorbed. If he died than he would lose 50 levels. Would all the effort he put into raising his stats be in vain?

'It is better to give up here than to quit the game!'

Ark was thinking that when something interrupted him.

"Huck huck huck, M-Master!"

Racard flew towards him with his tongue hanging out.

"What? Are the Fire Draconians coming here?"

"No, those guys moved in the opposite direction. Please give me water. It is unbearably hot."

"What did you say? Don't you know what kind of situation this is?"

"Damn, I know. But I already have no strength in my wings. Can't you give me a little bit of water? Ey, I don't know! I can't do anymore! Kill me or do whatever you want!"

Racard fell to the ground and acted like a child having a temper tantrum.

"This guy is acting like this when his Master might have to give up the game....."

However he couldn't blame Racard. Even if the Hearthstone had absorbed some of the fire aura, there was still a lava area. While Ark had been tirelessly shovelling for the last two days without any work, Razak and Radun were also exhausted. Racard had been flying around the whole time while monitoring the Fire Draconians. Since he was fat from Ark's blood, Racard in particular had double the energy consumed.

"It can't be helped."

Ark sighed and took out his sword. Of course even one drop of water couldn't be found in Dragonian. At first he had worried about hunger and thirst but Ark soon found a way to get water. His used his Elemental Sword to give his sword a magic attribute! He used the ice attribute on his sword which would heat up and melt. However, it wasn't that easy to obtain water using that method. The magic attribute was heavily influenced by the surrounding environment. At a river it was possible to make enough ice to eat Patbingsu (shaved ice). But the atmosphere of Dragonian made it difficult to create ice. Ark placed his sword about the pot and received a drop of water which fell. Aside from his pets, he was also suffering from thirst. When he saw a drop of water, a sigh naturally flowed out.

"Hah, this really is pitiful. There must not be water around..... No, if there was water in the area then I wouldn't need to use Elemental Sword to create water."

Ark murmured with a pitiful expression until he suddenly received a jolt to his brain.

"Eh? What, what the? What have I been doing?"
Ark stood up and looked around a stupid face. There were already a few pits within a 10 metre area.
'Oh my god. Doing this kind of thing Did I become really stupid? Why did I waste two days when there is such an easy method? Was there a reason to go around digging at the land like crazy?'
Ark hurriedly put away his sword and shovel.
"Racard, Razak there's no time so follow me!"
"What? W-water?"
"Shut up. There's no time for that!"