

Chapter 10 - Cryo Draco



Jade [Level 4] 5.7 Copper Chips
 Low Human [Rank 1, Copper], Female

Attributes [Stats]

Strength: 3	[Power: 3		Carry Limit: 3
Endurance: 3		Stamina: 4		Armor: 9
Agility: 5		Dexterity: 5		Speed: 5
Mind: 17		Mana Regen: 17		Perception: 5 20

Orbs [Carry Limit: 4 / 3]

1. Water Blast [Lv 2 (L-Mid)]
2. Pygmy Draco [Lv 1 (L-Mid)]
3. Short Spear [Lv 2 (Mid)]
4. Basic Tunic [Lv 2 (L-Mid)]

Head	Face	Body	Hands	Feet	Weapon	Weapon	Spell	Spell	Summon

Jade finally opened her eyes; she had woken up a little while ago, but her body refused to move. She groaned; that little voyage only gave her an aching body and a 5 Copper hole in her wallet. None of her Orbs progressed at all. She sighed. However, she did notice a notification on her wrist.

<[General] Congratulations! You have learned the Skill: Stamina Boost.>

<Stamina Boost [Iron]

- Effect: Stamina: +1>

“Wow, that’s something,” Jade murmured. It was a simple Skill but greatly needed. A permanent Stat boosts from a Skill? Oh, yes, please! She wondered if she could similarly

boost her other stats, but memories of rowing came back to her. She shuddered; tomorrow-Jade's problems.

Jade just wanted to lay in bed all day. But, no. Her friends were counting on her, and she needed to get stronger. Her uselessness on the boat had proven that. So, she forced her legs to swing out of bed. The sun was rising in a few minutes, and Jade wanted to be there for the new quests.

After teleporting to the Hunter's Hall, Jade was surprised by the crowd. She thought everyone left to hunt for Syn, but there were still at least fifty people remaining. Harvey stood behind the front desk with two other low-level secretaries, probably in preparation for the rush.

Some people gave Jade odd looks and a few snickered. Jade almost burst out laughing when she realized what it was: she had a bedhead. Why did the game even include something like this?

As she struggled to tame her hair, a guy approached Jade with a smile. Level 6 with three Copper Orbs. "Morning, do you have a party already?" His smile was warm and friendly.

Jade shook her head. "No, I'm somewhat new here." She made one final attempt to make herself presentable but probably made it worse. The guy looked amused.

"I figured. We've got an opening if you'd like to join my party. We typically take quests for the marsh if we can. With you, we'd have four people. We split the loot evenly between us. My name's Zach."

"I'm Jade. I came through the marsh on the way over here." Jade considered a moment. She could go on her own, but it'd probably be safer in a group. "Sure, I'll go with you." They might ambush her, but she didn't think she'd last long if she stayed solo.

"Great," Zach said. "Looks like the quests are up. I'll check them out."

"I'll come as well."

Zach nodded, and they walked to the board together. Zach wasn't too aggressive and let those with higher levels go first. Out of curiosity, Jade checked the bounties. Syn's

information changed to include Jin [Village] and Level 3. Jade idly wondered how Jin [Village] was handling the influx of new people. She'd have to message Wilma.

Escort quests were the most popular. The requester would ask for a higher level to take them to a nearby settlement or to watch over them in more dangerous areas in a similar way Syn did back in Jin [Village]. They required the quest taker to be at least Level 8. The rest of the quests were mainly collecting specific crafting items, which were what Zach grabbed.

"Ok, I got them," Zach said. He showed off two quests: 25 Water Legs and 25 Wind Feathers. 2 Coppers each for each quest." The quest board was nearly empty, only the difficult ones in the mountains remained.

"Ah, I had a few of each of those yesterday before I sold it," Jade mourned.

Zach shrugged. "It happens. It shouldn't take too long to get what we need. They're common drops."

"Hey Jade, come here for a moment," Harvey called out when she walked close to the front desk.

"Ok, just a second," Jade called back. She turned to Zach. "Mind if I meet you at the gate later? I need to organize a few things."

"Fine by me," Zach nodded. "How about in an hour?" Jade agreed and they parted ways after becoming friends.

"What's up, Harvey?" Jade asked.

"I heard you had a bit of an adventure on the lake last night."

"That's an understatement," she muttered.

Harvey chuckled. "You did get unlucky. Jillhurst wanted to meet you at the Dock. She should be there right now."

"Got it," Jade nodded. "Um, do you know that Zach guy I was talking to before?"

Harvey nodded. "He spawned here about a month ago. He has a good head on his shoulders. The higher-level guys like him because he's respectful to them. Completes most of his quests by the end of the day and doesn't take many risks."

"Have there been any questionable things that have happened around him? Like one of his teammates dying?"

"You are the cautious type. Good for you; that'll keep you alive longer." He tapped on an invisible screen. "Nothing suspicious so far. Two people died in one of his early groups, but that's not uncommon, and he wasn't the leader. I think he was saving up to buy his Journal from a vendor at the time. Once he leveled up and formed his party, he recruited newbies who had used all of their free escort quests and took them under his wing; no deaths. I don't think he's traveled outside of the Lotus [Town] area yet."

"Free escort quests?" Jade asked.

"For people who spawn here, we offer them three free escort quests for them to go out with a stronger team. You didn't have that where you spawned? It's fairly standard practice in most towns."

"I guess I had something similar," Jade mumbled. Wilma had paid for the quest in the end. "OK, thanks. See ya later."

"Good luck."

Jade teleported to the Dock next. She immediately found Jillhurst talking with Matt. Jillhurst rushed over the moment she saw Jade.

"Jade, thank you for coming," Jillhurst said. She spoke in the same clipped tone before, but there were slight cracks in her pitch.

"Glad you were able to recover," Jade responded with a smile.

Jillhurst winced. "I . . . I must apologize for what we put you through last night. And to thank you for what you did."

"I didn't do—"

Jillhurst raised a hand. “You were not supposed to do anything. You went above and beyond what was expected. You saved my life and the lives of my crew members. It is a debt I can never fulfill. But, I hope this will scratch the surface.”

Jillhurst held out a box in her hand. Jade hesitatingly took it.

<[General] You have received Jillhurst’s gift. Items added to Inventory:

- Copper Chips x10
- Heart [Summon, Water, Silver] x1>

“It’s part of the loot from the monsters we fought yesterday,” Jillhurst explained. “I talked it over with the team, and they all agreed to give it to you. In case you didn’t know, if you use higher-graded materials, you can get more unique upgrades for your Orbs. Hearts are used to upgrade summons.”

“This is- Thank you. It’s perfect. You saved my life as well.”

Jillhurst’s cocky grin broke through her stern mask. “It is the duty of the high leveled to protect the low. Remember that when you get older.”

Jade smiled back. “I will. Let’s move forward. As friends, no debts between us.” Jade extended her hand. Jillhurst clasped it tightly.

<[Social] You have become friends with Jillhurst.>

The tension eased as formality dissolved. Jade grinned. “Think I could join you for another fishing trip, this time without jellyfish?”

She let out a hearty laugh. “Of course, my friend! We shall take a nice calm trip to hunt Battle Sharks. Plus, I still need to show you those Freshwater Pike.”

“Now you’re speaking my language,” Jade laughed.

They said goodbyes. Jade teleported to the Library to reference a few things, then walked to the Market. The Market was fairly similar to the Market in Jin [Village], except that it was

bigger with more variety. Jade knew exactly what she wanted, so she made a few quick purchases.

Satisfied, she teleported back to her Room. She did something she had wanted to do since she first started the game. She bought a Small Kitchen for 10 Coppers. A door phased into existence on the wall of her room. Jade opened it excitedly. The next room was, unsurprisingly, a small kitchen. It had a countertop and a stove with pots and pans. Knives and basic kitchen tools were in the drawers. No oven like in the Tavern, so her cooking options were a bit limited until she upgraded it to Copper for 10 Silver Chips, but Jade was fine with that.

Jade immediately got to work and made two different types of sandwiches. The Meat Sandwich boosted her Strength and Carry Limit, while the Chicken Sandwich boosted her Speed and Carry Limit. She smiled that the meat from the heron turned into chicken; there was probably a joke that everything tasted like chicken somewhere there. She had limited time, so she could only make a few of each.

Finally, it was upgrade time. She opened the Orb menu and smiled as a list opened up to her.

<Upgrade:

[Summon] Pygmy Draco (Duke) [Neutral, Rank 1, Iron, Level 1 (Low-Mid)]

- Materials available – (Points: 101)
 - Heart [Summon, Water, Silver] – (Points: 100)
 - Heart [Summon, Wind, Iron] – (Points: 1)
- [Summon] Young Draco (Duke) [Neutral, Rank 1, Copper, Level 1 (Low)] – (Points: 101 / 10)
- [Summon] Water Draco (Duke) [Water, Rank 1, Copper, Level 1 (Low)] – (Points: 100 / 10)

- [Summon] Ice Draco (Duke) [Ice, Rank 1, Copper, Level 1 (Low)] – (Points: 101 / 10)
- [Summon] Hydro Draco (Duke) [Water, Rank 1, Copper (Unique), Level 1 (Low)] – (Points: 100 / 100)
- [Summon] Cryo Draco (Duke) [Ice, Rank 1, Copper (Unique), Level 1 (Low)] – (Points: 101 / 100)>

Jade reflected on what she knew of upgrading Orbs. First, crafting took materials that corresponded with the given Orb. Hearts were the most common category for Summons. Other internal organs, like the brain or stomach, also worked, but they were much more rare. Jade read that specific items would create different outcomes, but those recipes were locked behind Leagues or money.

Next, the grade of the material mattered. Iron gave one point, Copper gave 10, and Silver gave 100. The points required were essentially ten of the same rank materials. So, upgrading Iron to Copper required 10 points, and Copper to Silver required 100 points. However, if she used 100 points to upgrade from Iron to Copper, she could get a unique Orb. But, she could only use ten materials per upgrade, so she couldn't just stack a bunch of Iron items to reach the higher unique threshold. She guessed if she could use 1,000 points to upgrade from Iron to Copper, there might be a higher tier, but Jade couldn't find any reference to it.

Finally, the element. Jade knew she wanted the Ice element, especially after Wilma's advice. Ice Orbs typically caused the enemy to slow. She was tempted to go the lightning route for a complete stun, but the freeze debuff generally lasted longer. To get the Ice element, she could either use Ice materials or combine Water and Wind. If she had chosen one of the primary elements (Water, Wind, Fire, or Earth), then she could upgrade it later to a secondary element (Ice, Lightning, Metal, or Wood). If she changed Duke's element to Ice, he'd forever be stuck as Ice, even after ranking up. But, Jade could live with that.

Jade hit accept and looked at Duke's new stats.

<Slot 2 [Summon]: Cryo Draco (Duke) [Level 1 (Low)] – 100 / 100

- [Ice, Rank 1, Copper (Unique)]
- Mana: 1 / 2 | Str: 4 | End: 3 | Agi: 7 | Mnd: 3
- Physical Attack [Power]:
 - Bite [Ice, Piercing]: 40 (10)
- Special Attack:
 - Frost Shriek [Ice]: 5
 - Mana: 15 | Range: 15 | Cast: 3 | Cooldown: 180
 - Effect: Freeze
- Death:
 - Icy Bomb [Ice]: 50
 - Range: 5 | Cooldown: 1800
 - Effect: Freeze>

Jade nodded in approval. Duke upgraded the shriek attack and gained a new death attack, which was probably the unique ability gained from being Unique. Pity it had such a long cooldown, about half an hour; she learned before that her summon's cooldowns were based on the summon's Perception and not Jade's, so she couldn't just spam using Duke as a suicide bomber. Aside from that, most of his stats increased, and he gained the Ice element, which meant that his attacks had a chance to Freeze or slow an enemy. She'd have to run tests to calculate what the probability of Freezing an enemy was.

Satisfied with her progress, Jade teleported to the meeting location. After paying the town fee, Jade found Zach's group already waiting for her in their gear. Jade put hers on as well. She felt the weight of carrying more than her Carry Limit weigh her down as her Speed got cut in half. She kept it like that in the hope she could somehow get a new skill.

"Glad you could make it," Zach said, waving her over. "Guys, this is Jade. Jade, this is Dina, our assassin." Jade nodded at the short black-haired girl. Level 5 with two Copper Orbs, a

dagger and small knives around her waist, and green shoes. “Edgar, our tank.” Jade nodded at the Level 4 guy with short brown hair. He had an ax in his right hand, a wooden buckler strapped to his left arm, and a tunic with metal weaved into it; two Copper Orbs. “And, as you know, I’m Zach. I focus on fire and dealing damage over time.” Zach held a red sword and a small bag strapped to his waist. Level 6 with three Copper Orbs.

“I’m Jade. Nice to meet you.” She summoned Duke. The flying lizard was about twice as large and his scales shifted to a light blue tint. “I’m still pretty new, but I mainly focus on disruption with Water and Ice.”



“Aw, it’s so cute,” Dina said, cooing as she patted the creature. “I like you already. Anybody is better than the last guy we partied with. Glad he left to go on that wild slime chase for that stupidly high bounty in Jin [Village]. Hope he never comes back.” She spat on the ground.

“Bill wasn’t that bad,” Zach said but shut up after a glare from Dina.

“Jade? Where did I hear that name?” Edgar murmured. Then he snapped his fingers.

“Right, you fought a Toxic Jellyfish last night. How was that?”

“Really?” Zach said. “I didn’t know that. And you survived? Not everybody can say that, especially at your level.”

Jade blushed as she let Duke perch under her breasts. “It was terrifying. I didn’t do much and could only survive.”

Edgar nodded. “Still, it’s impressive.”

“Back to business. We won’t be going near the marsh dungeons,” Zach replied. “So, we shouldn’t meet high-level monsters. If anything happens, I’ll hold them off while you guys escape.”

“Oh, so noble,” Dina teased.

“Ahem,” Zach said. “We will be hunting Barbed Herons and Spiked Crabs for Water Legs and Wind Feathers. They are very common in the marsh. They like to ambush, so be careful. Edgar will draw the attacks, Jade and I will flank it to create openings, and Dina can finish it off.”

Jade raised her hand. “I can probably sense when we’re in danger,” she said. She didn’t want to explain her skill completely but thought it wise to say what she could do. “I have a Skill. So, be aware if I call out.”

Zach nodded. “That’s one worry off our list. Listen for Jade to call out ambushes, but stay vigilant. Let’s try to get in a rhythm. Any questions? Good. Let’s head out.”

The party headed down the beach road for about a mile, then began their trek into the marsh. They walked in a diamond formation. Dina was in front as a scout, followed by Edgar and Jade watching the left and right, and then Zach brought up the rear.

Jade asked, “I came through here before. Why are both herons and crabs here in the marsh? I thought creatures had their own territories.”

“This area is contested by both creatures,” Edgar explained. “The environment naturally creates Raw Rice, so the dungeon owners set it up to keep the area perpetually contested.” He motioned at all the stalks poking out of the marsh. “The Horned Otters also contest this area, but they don’t come out here too often.”

Jade looked around at the nearby plants. She had sort of forgotten about her Harvest skill. She crouched down next to one. “Is it alright for me to harvest them?” Jade asked.

Edgar nodded. “Yes, as long as you pay Lotus’s daily fee. You can sell them in the Garden if you’d like, though it’s not very profitable.”

“Mind if we stop just for a minute?” Jade asked.

The group shrugged, so Jade tried to harvest one. It dissolved into Mana immediately. She tried two more times and failed. The others tried to collect it as well. Only Edgar managed to succeed, then he taught the others his technique. The moment Jade collected the rice, the marsh lit up in gray light her skill revealed countless stalks of rice.

<[Ingredient] Raw Rice [Iron]

- Effect (Duration: 5 minutes):
 - Stamina +1>

“Wow, there is a lot of it here,” Jade murmured. Rice would probably be a staple in her diet from now on since it would increase her Stamina. She planned on coming out here later on to collect as much as she could.

“You have the Harvesting skill?” Edgar asked. “How did you get it? If you don’t mind me asking.”

“I got it from collecting a bunch of different items; at least five, I think.”

“Ah, that makes sense,” Edgar replied with excitement. “There aren’t enough materials in the area and other people usually don’t give away how to get skills freely. Skill manuals are tightly guarded by Leagues.”

“Glad I could help,” Jade smiled not worried that she gave away free information.

“This has been fun and all,” Zach spoke up. “But, let’s keep on going.”

Dina smirked. “Let’s try and make it more than ten steps this time.”

Jade laughed sheepishly. “Sorry, sorry.”

They continued in their line. Jade asked Edgar, “I didn’t see the otters when I came in before. Why don’t they come out more?”

“The otter dungeon lord lives in Lotus and set it up like that for the rice,” Edgar explained.

“The Horned Otters are Copper rarity creatures and could easily take over the marsh if they wanted. They come out every once in a while to contest the area, but nothing more than the bare minimum.”

“You know your stuff,” Jade said.

“He likes to do research,” Dina said looking over her shoulder. “Zach and I found him last week in the Hunter’s Hall asking people specific details about each area around Lotus. We snagged him up immediately.”

“Oh!” Jade exclaimed. “I saw you in the Library when I went.”

Edgar blushed. “Better to know something than not.”

“I completely agree,” Zach said. “On my first quest, the leader didn’t do enough research, and we lost half the party. Sand Worms.” He shook his head. “Stupid desert.

Jade was about to ask more, but time slowed down. “Ambush!” she yelled as she looked around as Duke took flight.

The others immediately jumped to attention. Zach drew his sword and it burst into flames, Edgar raised his weapon and shield, and Dina pulled her dagger out as she tried to look in every direction at once.

Jade was doing the same and she saw movement from her left. A spiked ball burst out of the tall grass. Jade tried to dodge, but the spike still hit her calf. Jade tripped and face-planted into the mud.

The others took immediate action. Dina jumped into the air surprisingly high. Edgar bulldozed into the direction the spiked ball came from while Zach helped Jade up. “You ok?” Zach asked.

“Yeah-” Jade began, but a second spiked ball came from the opposite direction. Jade pushed Zach back as the ball zoomed between them. They both landed in the mud but immediately rolled to their feet.

“Go after Edgar,” Zach called out. “I’ll watch our rear!” Jade nodded and followed in Edgar’s wake.

Jade didn’t have to run very far to find Edgar. A detached spiked ball was lodged into this shield and a one-armed crab stood in front of him. Edgar tried to swing his ax, but the crab scooted back out of reach; Edgar clearly didn’t put very much into Agility. Dina fell from the sky and landed on top of the crab, dagger first; Dina drove the crab to the ground. However, the crab probably did as much damage to her as Dina landed on the spikes around its body. She let out a cry of pain and jumped back into the air.

Jade saw an opening and cast Water Blast. The crab flipped on its back. Edgar rushed in for the finishing blow. The crab dematerialized and left behind an iron box. Edgar picked it up and Dina landed next to them.

“Where’s Zach?” Dina asked.

“One attacked us from behind. He stayed to ward it off.”

Dina cursed and dashed back to help Zach. Jade and Edgar chased after her. Edgar lagged. Edgar called, “Go! I’ll catch up!” Jade nodded and rushed ahead.

By the time Jade arrived, the fight was over. Zach threw dust from his pouch which exploded under its body, flipping it over, and Dina finished it off with her jump attack. Edgar bumbled up a few moments later.

Zach laughed. "That was exciting. Not a bad way to start our trip. Anybody hurt?" The group looked at each other and shook their heads. Dina got the worst of it when she landed on the spikes, and Zach got some scraps from his slugfest with his crab, but nothing too serious.

Just then, they heard a squawk above them. The party looked up in time to see a Barbed Heron dropping from the sky. They moved out of the way, except for Edgar. The bird landed on him, and he and the bird fell to the ground. The group stared at the frozen bird. Jade checked her Orbs. She had forgotten about Duke in the heat of the moment. The Draco had died and activated its new death ability by freezing the heron out of the sky.

"That's rather convenient," Jade mumbled, though she lamented she didn't get to see the new ability in action. She stepped forward and began stabbing it with her spear. Dina and Zach joined in. By the time Edgar got to his feet, the bird was dead.

"That was fun," Zach said. "Let's get hunting."

"I think we may have gotten too close to the heron's territory," Jade said. They were surrounded by five Barbed Herons in the air, all of them Level 6 except for one which was a Level 7.

"Wasn't this your idea?" Zach asked. The four members of the party stood back to back.

"You didn't have to agree with it," Jade said. "It's your job as team captain to turn down stupid ideas."

"It sounded good at the time," Zach replied. "Things were going so well."

"We were overconfident," Edgar said. He had reached Level 5, much to the jealousy of Jade. With his level up, he put his points into Power and Endurance; Jade had to stop herself from staring as he bulked up. For his open slot, Edgar equipped a helmet Orb he had bought before.

Sadly, Jade learned that gaining levels in a group went a lot slower as she was barely making any progress, even though she was fighting more difficult monsters.

“Talking about who’s to blame isn’t going to help us out of this mess,” Dina said. “How’s everyone’s Mana?”

“350,” Zach said. “My Fire Ball and Poppers are gone, plus my armor is halfway down.” Poppers was the bag of sand on his waist; when Zach threw the sand, it would create a flash, bang, and minor damage. He used them to either create an opening or escape.

“Just over 200 for me,” Edgar said. “My new helmet is gone and all of my other Orbs are damaged.”

“400 for me, full health,” Jade reported. She had continually eaten her Meat Sandwiches so she could equip both spear and tunic; she was down to two sandwiches after three hours of fighting. She had a plan to gain a skill for increasing her Carry Limit, but she didn’t want to be a burden to the group. “Duke’s death ability is on cooldown for another fifteen minutes.”

Dina shook her head. “You and your ridiculous Mana Regen. I’m at 300. I have maybe one more high jump with my shoes. My other Orbs have all taken damage.”

“Look sharp,” Zach called out. “They’re coming.”

Two Level 6 Barbed Herons dove out of the sky. Edgar raised his shield to block one, and Jade cast Water Blast on the other. Edgar’s heron hit the shield with a loud thump. He let out a cry of pain as the beak broke through the wood and into his arm. The heron detached its beak, flew back into the air, and grew back its beak. Edgar took a few seconds to unequip his shield then reequip it to remove the lodged beak; luckily it didn’t go deep enough to dig into his arm.

Jade’s heron got knocked back but quickly recovered for another dive; her spell wasn’t strong enough to knock the higher-leveled ones out of the sky. The bird aimed at Zach for its next dive. The bird impaled Zach in the thigh as Zach sliced the bird’s wing. The heron broke its beak off, but it couldn’t fly due to its damaged wing, so it waddled away.

“Gah! That hurts,” Zach said as he started to hobble towards the heron. Jade almost laughed as she saw the two limp away. Frustrated, Zach yelled, “Kill it! I can’t move with this beak in my leg.”

“Got it!” Dina cried out. She was by far the fastest in the group. She tackled the injured creature. They rolled to the ground in a mess of feathers and knives; they disappeared behind some tall grass; Edgar followed.

Jade kept her eyes on the sky. Two more Level 6 Herons dove. Jade summoned Duke and called out, “Shriek!” Duke took to the air and when he was within range of both birds, it let out a high-pitched scream. Both birds dropped out of the sky as their feathers froze, falling amid the tall grass. The shriek didn’t deal much damage, but it did wonders in grounding the birds. Jade pointed at the clump of grass one of the birds fell into and yelled, “Bite!”

Duke obeyed as Jade went after the other fallen one. She found the heron climbing to its feet. She stepped forward with a spear jab, but the bird squawked and jumped into the air out of range; she tried to shoot it with Water Blast, but it easily dodged and took to the sky. She glanced at her Orbs and saw Duke’s Mana drain to 0. His fight hadn’t gone well.

She ran where the heron Duke had been fighting and found Zach thrusting his flaming sword down. The heron burst into flames. One more strike killed it. He picked up the iron box.

“Looks like the others finished theirs off as well,” Zach said. “Let’s regroup.” Jade nodded and made their way back. Zach was still hobbling with a beak in his leg.

Both Dina and Edgar looked ragged, but still in one piece. They looked to the sky. Three herons still circled them from above.

“Please say we got enough feathers,” Jade asked.

“I got one,” Dina said.

“I got two,” Zach confirmed. “That’s enough. Let’s get out of here. Maybe if we show we’re leaving, they’ll leave us alone.”

They slowly walked in a tight group keeping their eyes on the sky and the tall grass. Once they made it back to the path, the herons let them go. The group let out a collective sigh. Then burst out laughing.

“That was fun,” Dina giggled.

“Let’s never do that again,” Jade replied. “What happened to not taking risks?”

“You’re a bad influence on us,” Zach teased. “Come on, we finished our quest. Let’s try and make it back without any more fights. I’m too exhausted. Could you help me destroy this beak? It is rather uncomfortable.” Jade winced as the beak went all the way through the leg; there was no blood, of course, but a constant stream of blue mist flowed out. Dina and Jade held him still while Edgar broke it with his ax.

They traveled quickly through the marsh. They only encountered one more Spiked Crab, which they easily killed. Once within the Town, they teleported straight to the Hunter’s Guild. They handed in their quest items and sold the rest, except for the ingredients which they gave to Jade in exchange for a portion of the reward. In the end, Jade came away with over 6 Coppers and a bunch of fish, poultry, and rice.

“I felt we worked well together. You up for tomorrow morning?” Zach asked. “8 at the front gate? I’ll pick up the quests beforehand.”

Jade nodded. “Sounds good to me. We’ll keep in contact if something comes up.” They had all become friends after getting along with each other while fighting.

Dina waved energetically, and Edgar gave a polite nod. Then, they all went their separate ways. Jade stayed in the Hunter’s Hall a bit longer as she looked over her Orbs.

<Orbs (100%):

Total Weight: 4 / 3

1. Water Blast [Level 2 (Mid)] – 100 / 100
2. Cryo Draco (Duke) [Level 1 (Mid)] – 100 / 100
3. Spear [Level 2 (Mid)] – 100 / 100
4. Basic Tunic [Level 2 (Low-Mid)] – 100 / 100>

Jade sighed at her slow progress. She had used Duke and Water Blast the most, though Duke was upgrading at a much slower rate than usual because the Draco was Copper. Her spear and tunic weren't increasing very fast, since she rarely got into melee range. She was finding her style relied more on keeping her distance and positioning herself for the most disruption. She still couldn't do much damage, so being in a balanced party was lovely.

Before she left the Hunter's Hall, she stopped by Harvey. "Whassup," Jade greeted.

Harvey nodded. "Nice job completing your first quests. Sounded like there were no issues."

"We did get a little close to the heron territory, but we learned our lesson," Jade replied.

"Hey Harv, do you know where I can get a map?"

"Leaving so soon?"

"Sadly, I'm not planning on staying very long."

"Pity. They sell maps in the Market, but up-to-date maps can get expensive."

Jade shook her head. "I don't need an updated map, just for the general layout."

"Oh, if that's the case, we have cheap ones here," Harvey said. He pulled out a shard. "This map's last update was about a year ago, but most of the locations haven't been updated for much longer. Many things have changed since then."

Jade looked at it eagerly. "How much?"

"10 Iron Chips."

Jade eagerly paid the small fee and took the shard.

<[General] You have collected Map Shard [<1%].

Activate? Yes | No>

Jade accepted the prompt and eagerly looked through her menu but couldn't find anything.

"Um, how do I look at the map?" she asked.

“Where did you spawn?” Harvey asked with concern. “They didn’t teach you anything, did they?” He motioned at the Mana Crystal on the counter. “Look at your teleport map.”

Jade blushed. “Ah, I should have known that.” She touched the crystal and looked at her new teleport map.

The entire map lit up, but most of it was gray. Many settlements were listed, but all were dark gray except the places she had visited were displayed with a gold dot. Jade glanced at her destination; it was a long way away. Lotus [Town] was a couple of hours walk away from Jin [Village]. Cela [Dungeon] was about fifty times that distance.

After asking Harvey, Jade learned the color would fade away gradually if you didn’t visit a location. The territories of dungeons changed so quickly, it was hard to get an accurate map. However, Harvey mentioned the cities and most towns would still be at their locations since it would take a big event to wipe them out.

“Thank you for the help,” Jade said gratefully. “It means a lot.”

“No problem, little miss,” Harvey smiled. “Where are you looking to go?”

“South. I have a Journal west of Alvin [City]. I want to find it as soon as I can. I asked the Dock people if I could hire a boat to travel across the lake, but they said the jellyfish blocked the way. I don’t want to deal with that again.”

Harvey laughed. “I can’t imagine you would. Even if you got past the jellyfish, the Lizard-kin aren’t too friendly to humans. The best way down would be through the desert.”

Jade grimaced. “Any suggestions on how to get across?”

Harvey nodded. “Every week or so, a caravan comes through to usher people to other Settlements. I think the next one comes in two days. It’ll cost you 25 Coppers to get to Alvin [City]. Want me to reserve you a spot on it?”

“That’d be great!” Jade exclaimed, then winced as she looked at her wallet. She only had 10 Copper Chips. “Could you reserve my spot? I don’t quite have enough yet.” Jade laughed wryly. “Whenever I make a bit of money, I always spend it all immediately.”

Harvey laughed. "It's an endless cycle. Not a problem. Just have it ready in two days."

Jade smiled. "I better let you get back to work. Thank you again." Jade held out her hand to shake.

Harvey smiled back and they shook hands. "My pleasure, little miss."

<[Social] You have become friends with Harvey.>