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SuperCheats.com's Unofficial Guide to

Final Fantasy XIII

by Chris Boots-Faubert



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Final Fantasy XIII Guide

Final Fantasy XIII Guide by Chris Boots-Faubert for SuperCheats.com



Over the years we have come to expect an ever-increasing level of graphical and technical excellence from Square Enix in its Final Fantasy series. Each new title is an improvement on the previous, though the sub-series system that is used in the series does tend to confuse players, especially if the FFXI-type game is their favorite - so to be clear, XIII is not part of the sword and sorcery series!

Having pointed that out, I should also add that there are elements that exist in both worlds - for instance there is a tiny pet Chocobo in XIII and though it is nothing like what the player experiences in XI there is a tacit link nonetheless, and later there are Chocobo that are more familiar. The money is the same, most of the spells are similar in naming convention and function, and in many respects despite the fact that it is clearly a different universe, knowledge of one of the subs in the series will benefit you here..

FFXIII is the flagship title for the Fabula Nova Crystallis series of Final Fantasy games. Set in a high-tech world with a mixture of enclave and wilderness, it is a story about resisting the inevitable (and evil) progress that is created by technology - if progress means totalitarian regimes, technocracy, and fascism rolled into a neat package of oppression and death...

The Active Time Battle (ATB) system reappears in this title - though it is somewhat different this time around - allowing the player to stack battle commands and execute them in long chains. Battle in this world is a divided process, where once engaged, the combatants are removed from the active world and exist in a micro-world of their own for the duration of the fight.

The role (job) system that is used in the game is pretty straight-forward and is one you will have encountered before in FF games. There are five classes, and while your character can learn more than one class of skills they can only use the skills associated with the class that they are designated as in play.

The party system is mostly unchanged as well - in the game a party (called a Paradigm) consists of three characters, each playing their own designated specialty. Up to six Paradigm sets can be stored in the configuration deck, and the player can call up those different configurations pretty much at will during battle, lending a level of flexibility to the process that will take some getting used to.

There are a lot of similarities between FFX and FFXII but despite those this is really a game unique to itself, so judge it on its own merits rather than comparing it to previous games in the series and you will not go far wrong!

There are some items of note that I cover in the next section to help you quickly get your feet on the ground, but I want to emphasize that the first third of the game is really a very long tutorial mode - you do not even begin developing your characters and their abilities until after that, so if you were expecting to jump wright in to the mechanics of all that, well, no. Just play the game and enjoy the progression of the story - which is at its richest in the first few chapters - and as always, have fun!

Things of Note

Summoning an Eidolon

The following are of specific note to you as you start playing - this information will clear up some of the confusion that tends to exist whether you are a new FF fan or an old hand.

Jobs, Leveling, and XP

There are a total of six specializations - Commando, Medic, Ravager, Sentinel, and Synergist, and Saboteur, and the system of buffs, debuffs, and active powers will be familiar to fans of the series. In fact other than variations on the names and titles the underlying system is very similar to the other titles in the series, which makes this an easy transition into the new environment.

The big difference in XIII relates to the experience system - which does not use XP per se, but rather makes use of the Crystarium System that was used in X to replace the encounter-based XP system used in the other games in the series. This is actually pretty simple - think of Crystarium Points (CP) as you would Experience Points (XP), and then factor that rather than gaining CP for everything that you do, you only gain it from battle encounters.

Where XP would be directly applied to your character causing you to level up automatically, CP is a points system that is banked, and is only used when you activate the interface to the Crystarium System and actually spend the points to upgrade abilities and stats. That is as simple a description of the differences between XP and CP as I can draw.

At the conclusion of a battle, the CP earned is applied to the CP bank, which basically accumulates until you use it. When you do use it you can spend it to upgrade specific skills in whatever path you are following - there is a sort of concentric set of rings with the various paths flowing from it and while that does not make a lot of sense now, once you actually unlock the interface and start using it, it will make sense. Really...

Summoning System

One minor alteration to the game is the Summoning System - which follows the alternate system of a single summons that is crystal dependent. Called 'Eidolon' in this game, the power to summon springs from the crystal that is integral to the characters Mark of L'Cie - which means that once the creature is summoned it essentially replaces the character in the battle unless the character activates Gestalt Mode, in which case they will link together with the summoned creature, which will take on a special form or function, and then become one with it for the fight.

Some old and familiar creatures reappear here - Shiva and Bahamut come to mind - as well as new creatures, and of course there are the creatures summoned by the enemy via the summoning portals, representing a mixture of organics and machine.

Before we move on I want to underscore that summoning is a major feature in the game both in strategy and challenge, and it is one area that you, the player, will want to concentrate in order to become familiar as quickly as you can. Doing so will remove a lot of the slope off of the learning curve here - I cannot stress that enough.

The fal'Cie and L'Cie

The fal'Cie are basically mech's - technologically-based beings with serious powers who were created by a being called The Maker. Though they are not strictly speaking "the government" their influence over civil affairs and the lives of the people of the two worlds of Cocoon and Pulse blur the lines in every direction.

Especially resented by the human inhabitants of these worlds, the fal'Cie are really only one of the enemies here -

the humans that cooperate with and even actively support the fal'Cie are the other element. Clearly the general population is oppressed, and the oppression is not veiled or hidden. The relocation - or Purge - that is underway is only a thinly disguised culling. It becomes very clear that the purpose is to kill the humans no longer considered viable by the powers that be, and not relocate them.

The big issue is the aims of the fal'Cie, which to be frank, while we can easily understand the outward process of, are still largely not known. We know that they consider the L'Cie to be a necessary part of their search for knowledge, but we do not know what the search is for - what knowledge they are seeking. We know that they do not value human life at all - considering that the reward for cooperation is death, and the punishment for failing to complete the assigned task given to you is - wait for it - another form of death!

Add to that the fact that the whole issue of cooperation is a trap in itself - after all they subject you to the conversion process and make you an L'Cie but they do not even give you a hint at what specifically it is that they want you to do after that! And even if you do figure out what it is that they want you to do, if you fail to complete that task in a timely fashion - the time limit being set by the fal'Cie don't you know - you die. Man if that is not a raw deal, I don't know what is!

On the upside though, once you have completed the conversion process you have special powers and abilities and can summon a monster/being to fight for or with you. In fact that is so cool that if death was not your ultimate reward and punishment, it wouldn't be so bad really...

Characters(1)

Like in all of the games there is a cadre of characters around whom the events and action focus as it unfolds. For FFXIII that group includes the following characters that you can play:

Hope Estheim (Hopu Esutohaimu) - At 14-years-old Hope is the youngest member of the team. Known for his rather colorful style of dress and badass attitude, there is a lot of baggage in that small head. For instance despite the fact that Snow is ostensibly his protector, Hope hates him, in part because he blames Snow for his mother's death when she was part of the resistance serving under him.

Hope was subjected to conversion as an L'Cie, and his Eidolon is Alexander - who transforms into a fortress in Gestalt Mode. Alexander is a light elemental warrior - infer from that what you will about the character of Hope - and his Gestalt Power seems to me to be about as appropriate as they come when you consider that he is basically protecting a child.

Lightning (Ekureru Faron / Éclair Farron) - A former Sargent in the Guardian Corps, she has become disillusioned with the entire societal structure that she once served. Much of her emotional baggage revolves around her sister, who she swore to protect after the death of their parents - a task she did not manage well, resulting in her sister being converted to an L'Cie. When Lightning attempted to intercede she was herself subjected to the conversion process, and is an L'Cie herself.

Her specialty weapon is the "Gunblade" - a device that transforms between a gun and a sword, and her Summon is Odin - yes, THAT Odin - who takes the form of a stallion that Lightning can ride when she triggers Gestalt. Odin has a matched set of detachable blades that Lightning can access when he is in travel mode, and use as her active weapon.

Oerba Dia Vanille (Oruba-Daia Vanira) - A younger Ginger-haired girl who was, until the government crackdown, simply a citizen of Cocoon. Not much is known - or revealed - about her personal background, so it is mostly her characteristics that we focus upon. Young, loyal, passionate, and obstinate when she has made up her mind, Vanille serves as the narrator for the story.

Her special weapon is a fishing rod with multiple lines that she can deploy to damage enemies (!) which is rather an odd choice of weapon if you ask me... Her Eidolon is Hecatoncheir, who takes the form of an Earth Elemental, which is pretty cool. When he is in Gestalt Mode he transforms into a Mech Unit (yes, really) that Vanille then

pilots, delivering some decent air-support.

Tag Line: "Well that wasn't scary at all!"

Oerba Yun Fang (Oruba-Yun Fangu) - The second of only two L'Cie ever given the Focus to summon Ragarok and a past associate of Cid (remember Cid?!), Yun is a raven-haired warrior whose special weapon is a spear that can transform into a triple-staff (a flail weapon of Chinese origins). We meet Yun last, but it is often true that life saves the best for last, and there you have it!

Her Eidolon is Bahamut, and in his Gestalt Mode he becomes an airborne warrior. One of my best mates is gay, and he swears that Yun is a lesbian and the strongest warrior save for Lightning in the game. He believes that Yun, who was originally scripted to be a male character, is Square's homage to gay gamers. I dunno mate, could be... Stranger things have happened.

Tag Line: "As if there was any doubt!"

Sazh Katzroy (Sazzu Kattsuroi) - An ex-military pilot, Sazh is something of an enigma. Despite the fact that it is suggested that he does not know Lightning well from his comments during the opening sequence of the tut just after the battle on the train, that is a little misleading. He may not know her personally, but he knows her type - and in particular the military mindset. From that familiarity comes the advantage of understanding her mindset and discipline - and though this is not really touched upon in the dialogue when you examine the decisions that he makes and the way in which he manipulates her, Sazh has a bit more understanding than he lets on.

He is an enigma of sorts - for instance it is often difficult to tell just what motivates him. He has a young son who was chosen and subjected to conversion as an L'Cie - but Sazh is also L'Cie - and that at least partly explains his own willing involvement in the resistance efforts. He has declared his intentions to rescue his son, so we can presume that this is at least part of his motivation, though he seems to be more of a follower than a leader, which makes the successful conclusion of that aim unlikely.

His weapon form is dual-pistols that can transform into a sniper rifle, and his weapon skill is long-distance shooting. That actually makes a lot of sense strictly from a character point of view because there is a touch of the coward in him - you will see that as the adventure unfolds - and it makes it somewhat difficult to like and care about him completely.

His Eidolon is Brynhildr, a female Fire Elemental who transforms into a car that Sazh rides in during Gestalt Mode. In case you have not tripped to this yet, Brynhildr is actually a Valkyrie from mythological legend (see <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Brynhildr> for more information).

Like most of the main characters and supporting mobs in the Final Fantasy games, there is an element of mythology in play here - the games rely heavily upon a mixture of myth and legend from practically every culture in the world - which may be one reason why they are so popular!

Tag Line: "You Should See Your Daddy Now!"

Snow Villiers (Suno Viriasu) - A former resistance leader in the Team Nora, Snow is a simple package with some complicated edges to him. He is not stupid, despite filling the role as the blond dude stereotype, but he is portrayed as the dumb-jock melee fighter nonetheless! Considering that he is supposed to be the leader of an organized resistance band, that last but does not make much sense.

The strength of his abilities is his excellent physical condition and size - according to the chatter on the boards the developers often identified Snow with each other by his shoe size, the nickname intended as a comment on his physical prowess and abilities I assume. His ability to soak up damage while losing health slowly is marked in play, in fact he is the most durable member of the team as far as I can tell.

According to canon, while his strengths lay in brawling and physical attacks, his motivation comes from his inner

sense of responsibility for the people who follow him. His Eidolons are the Shiva Sisters (Nix and Stiria) who transform into a motorcycle that Snow can ride in Gestalt Mode.

While mounted on the motorcycle Snow has access to a large gun as his specialty weapon, and when he is on his own feet he prefers the knuckle sandwich to guns. He is pretty good with grenades too - something to keep in mind if you are facing multiple opponents in enclosed areas..

Tag Line: "That's what I'm talking about!"

(1) See Appendix A, Note 1

The Story (or how much to tell you?)

Here is the thing - knowing too much about the back-story here will actually make the game less entertaining for you. What I mean by that is simple - there are aspects to this that while they are contradictory on the surface, come out in the end to explain what has happened and the decisions that were made, as well as what actually motivated the protagonists. Knowing any of that before the end of the story would naturally detract from your enjoyment of it. So I am going to be really careful about what I tell you, since I only really need to tell you what you need to know to play from the start!

First thing is, Pulse and Cocoon are not really two separate worlds - they are related halves of one world-society and each is somewhat dependent upon the other - but the human inhabitants are not aware of that. These "worlds" were created by the fal'Cie around 1,300 years ago, but at some point in the intervening centuries the fal'Cie that oversaw each became enemies.

The war that they fought with each other is largely based upon propaganda, but both sides began to exploit the humans that reside in their sphere, and the humans largely had nothing to say on the matter. Eventually the previous detentes that existed between the two groups broke down completely, and the War of Transgressions occurred, ending in a stalemate.

The result was two armed camps that indoctrinate their humans to hate and fear the other side. And the creation of L'Cie - but to what end that programs ultimate goal is nobody knows. Once a human is turned into an L'Cie, they are basically no longer trusted or liked by most of the non-converted human population - but then again they are not liked or trusted by the fal'Cie either, so really the only choice they have is to embrace the suck and enjoy what time they have left before the fal'Cie either kill them outright or turn them into an abomination - which is just death in a different form. Or do they?

Now we get to the part I cannot really tell you about - the motivation that sets Lightning, Snow, and the others on the path that they have chosen. There is a goal - in fact it is a worthy one - but you will have to play the game to find out! And don't even think about loading your web browser and hitting Google for that information buddy! I can hear you thinking about it, you don't have me fooled! Just play the game, and be surprised!

Chapter Organization

A lot of video games are broken up into logical chapters and sections that you can actually load to play or replay whenever you want. This is not one of those games.

The chapters are broken up into sections, and to denote this and make this walkthrough logical I designate the key subsection as the subchapter heading - thus below you see that chapter one is "Chapter 01A: Defiers of Fate" and then the next logical part is "Chapter 01B: Another Rebellion."

There are actually subsection titles that appear in between these two areas in the chapter, but they are not really significant in the sense that they deserve their own section - they are inclusive to the subsection that is included under the logical heading of the subsection that begins that part of the walkthrough.

There is a logic to this, and it will start to make sense as you review the Events menu in your data journal. Lumping the smaller subsections together into a single subsection just makes more sense from a practical approach. It also makes it easier if you need to replay a section if, for example, you did not catch all of the dialogue, since we are making new saves to represent each subsection as we progress.

The first chapter is largely the lore and back story, the tutorials, and getting to know the main characters who you will be playing as, and leveling. If you follow each section you will note that any special items, treasure balls, and save points are noted.

Please be aware that there are Achievements/Trophies in the game that rely upon you having retained certain items or completed certain tasks. I indicate those in the body of the text for each section, but there is also an Appendix in the back that covers the Achievements and Trophies as well.

01A: Defiers of Fate

First Fight - and Chains

The game opens with a stunning cinematographic treatment that follows the 'Purge' train as it rips along the track inside of a tube of glass-like construct. Seated in rows along the sides of the train car are prisoners - or rather mostly prisoners since you have to be held in place by the electronic restraint in order to be technically a prisoner - so you do not qualify in that respect! The armored guard begins to patrol the car, and you make your move, taking him out and setting off a chain of events that eventually leads to the train being crippled and forced to a stop.

Outside you do battle with a saw-blade equipped behemoth called a Manasvin Warmech - and win - and in the process you learn about the battle system and how it works via a brief tutorial. How cool is that? The whole time-stacking thing will come in handy, but right now you are more interested in making your way off of the train and into the city.

You are Hans - and your companion is Franz - and you are here to pump all the girlie-men... Wait... Sorry about that - 90's flashback - just ignore it, it will go away in a moment. Right, you are Lightning, and your companion is Sazh, and you are about to head out into the Hanging Edge to see what there is to see, and maybe dish a little payback to the man! Err... Machine?

As you run along the tracks ahead you will see a spot where there is damage and rubble - and on the immediate left of that spot is a glowing screen for a computer interface - this is a Save Station! The very first thing you should do upon spotting it is run to it and engage it, and save your progress up to this point. Now if the power goes out or you need to quite you are covered!

You may have noticed that in addition to saving, there is also an option to shop! If you select that you get a list of the shops you can access - right now that list has just one entry: Unicorn Mart. If you look on the lower left corner of the screen you will see that you have 200 Gil (Gil is a common monetary unit in the Final Fantasy universe, and is thought to be based upon the Dutch Guilders).

Unicorn Shop

After you enter the shop you can choose to buy or sell - you don't really have anything to sell right now but you can buy some potions if you like as they are only 50 Gil. Why not do that now? If you used your potion in the fight a few minutes ago, having another to replace it would be a good thing.

If you had items to sell to the store, you could convert them to Gil and get them out of your inventory which is something to bear in mind later. Now that you are done here, go ahead and exit out of store and Save Station.

Continuing down the track initiates a pop-up window that explains Enemy Encounters to you - basically it shows you the warning on the map and explains that if you venture too close to the indicated symbol you will end up in a combat encounter with that enemy. You can access that information in your journal at any time by selecting it (Y on the 360) and then clicking the Exploration menu.

There are two enemies indicated on the map - and you should see them ahead of you as well, with the red triangles over their heads. This will not be a tough battle, and you can always use the CP, right? Go ahead and engage them now - or wait for them to notice you and engage you which they will eventually do.

When the battle concludes you will get a Battle Results screen that shows you a variety of information including how well you did (denoted by stars), how long the battle should have taken, how long it actually took, and the initiative bonus (assuming you attacked them and not the other way around there will be one). You also receive your score, and a breakdown of the damage done per second.

Right, so now that we have that covered, hit the action button to see if there was any loot (called Spoils on the game

screen). I don't know how you did, but I did not get anything off of the pair. Bummer.

Ahead of you on the left just past where you saw the enemy is a warp portal - but of course you have no idea what it is and neither does Sazh, who actually speculates on what it might be for.

Continue on to the rubble piled ahead and you will spot a small swirling blue circle on the ground - that is a jump-point so just walk into it and you will jump up on the rubble and, eventually, over it where you will encounter another pair of enemy soldiers. Go ahead and kill them now, and then continue on, where you will find a trio ahead.

As you engage the trio you will notice that you have another attack option - a spinning attack - that you can use. Because there are three enemy here you are likely to take some damage - keep an eye on your health bar and use some of the potions that you have (if you bought one from the shop you will have 16 or 17 now depending on if you used one in the first battle).

At this point you have added some intel to your journal - having encountered a PSICOM Enforcer and a PSICOM Warden, which are members of the Shock Troop and Hunter Classes respectively.

Continue to the next jump-point and over the rubble and you will encounter a floating ball that you can open - a sort of floating supply chest. Grab the potion from that and then run to the end of the track, where you encounter another warp portal with a trooper guarding it. As you watch the trooper summons two war dogs (called Pantheron) from the portal - now you know for sure what those devices do, don't you?

A brief dialogue takes place between you and Sazh - who you are still getting to know - and he is not a wave of sunshine and flowers! You don't listen to his complaining for long before you move in to engage the group - a fight that you should not have too much trouble with. In fact I would be surprised if you needed to use a potion here! Remember that once you exit from combat you automatically heal, so only use a potion if you actually need to to keep from dying, right?

Ahead and on the right is a small set of stairs, and if you go up you will encounter another one of those treasure balls with a few potions in it. Go ahead and do that now, you cannot have too many potions, right? Head back down the stairs and along the tracks for another Save Point on the left - use that now.

Continue along the path for a few more fights in which Sazh starts to contribute more, until you get a brief CS in which you encounter a trooper and dog and declare "Preemptive Strike!"

This fight triggers the tutorial for using potions - and you may as well do this now. After the fight ends an incoming energy weapon destroys a section of the tracks, initiating a short CS in which you start to use one of your special devices to float across and in a panic Sazh grabs you, damaging the device. Wow, what a brave man he turned out to be.

Sazh leads the way, trying to make up for his moment of terror by offering an alternate route, and you do battle with a Warden and a pack of dogs. After the fight he leads you up the steps where there is a jump-point - before you take that though look to the right - there is a Save Point here as well. Go ahead and use that now.

The jump-point leads to a lift you can use to go over to the lower level - so go ahead and engage its controls and then jump off. Ahead is another group of enemy for you to kill including a semi-boss mob. This triggers the Chains Tutorial - yay!

You learn about the chain gauge and how it works, and get an example as you fight to help illustrate the point. All things being equal you should five-star this battle in under a minute, so go have fun with it!

The CS that follows this fight starts to fill you in on the back story but only a little, and Sazh comes to one of those cusp events in every adventure.

01B: Another Rebellion

Intro to NORA

A brief CS in which we meet Snow takes place, and then we are in control of Snow. In the corner nearby is a treasure ball - go ahead and empty that now and then head for the save point ahead and use that so that you have a save point past the sub chapter change. Now continue along the track and you will reach a jump point and have a brief if morale-raising CS in which you encounter some more of your rebels.

Fight your way to the next CS in which you encounter some of the refugees from the train, and you start to tell them that you will help them when they insist that they want to help you! After you arm the volunteers, an older woman steps up - this is Hope's mother - pay attention now, this is an important moment. As Hope starts to protest, she insists that she, like the others, wants to help. You ask her if she is sure and she replies: "Yeah - Mom's are tough."

This is also where you meet Vanille for the first time - though you cannot really tell that due to the robes that she is wearing. She is the young girl that you hand the last weapon to and tell to protect the other non-combatants.

After the CS ends you are standing before the enemy - to your immediate left is a treasure ball with an Iron Bangle in it - grab that and equip it - it adds 50 points to your HP. To equip it open the Main Menu ('Y' on the 360), select Equipment, then the character you want to equip an item on, and then Equip to open the menu. Move down to Accessory and hit the action button, then select the item from the Accessory Inventory that you want to equip and use the action button on it to equip it.

There is a new entry for PSICOM Security on your journal if you want to take a look at that, otherwise close the journal and head forward, fighting your way to the next checkpoint CS - you encounter a save point early on if you want to save, otherwise just work your way forward until the nice doggie comes out to play! The nice doggie in this case being a Beta Behemoth - nice bit of work that one. Still you should have no trouble five-starring him, and you get a potion in the loot, so bonus!

After the battle with the doggie you get a CS of another skirmish in which things go sort of bad - an armored hovering vehicle shows up and starts slicing up your troops! You spot a weapon that you could use - but it is out in the open - and like an idiot you decide to go for it!

As you dive for the weapon you take a few rounds in the back and that kid's (Hope) mom saves you with a well-placed RPG round only to end up hurt for her trouble. Pretty much everyone you were trying to save ends up dying by sliding off of the now broken trackway which was destroyed in the last attack. As you and Hope's Mom begin to slide you end up losing your grip and she falls to her death.

You see the two kids - and more to the point they see what happened - which is a major bummer - and then you fall too. Vanille tries to help Hope, encouraging him to move and the CS ends and you are prompted to save the game.

01C: Fallen Innocence

Sazh learns the truth about the Purges

A lot happens here - some of it important to the plot - so you should really watch this series of CS's and pay attention to the things that are said. There are clues here man! Clues!

Back to Lightning and Sazh again - you are on some sort of transport that is flying through the area and you have a conversation about the morality of the situation and what is really happening - Sazh is a bit confused about what he feels it seems - angry but with no clear idea of where his moral compass grounds. Just as the conversation gets personal a mech unit flies by and, spotting you, lands on the deck of the transport to engage you.

After you finish off the mech you spot a large construct surrounded by patrol ships and fighters descending from above, and a voice begins to demand surrender. We see that Snow is alive, and then we get a brief view of pretty much everyone - ending up on Hope and Vanille (who is quite the hotty).

Vanille tries to give Hope the weapon and a hug, but he is not having any of that, and then she bounces off to who knows where with Hope in pursuit. The CS fades to black and we get our second taste of Vanille narrating, then we are back to Lightning.

As Sazh watches open-mouthed Lightning jumps off of the front of the transport! Grabbing his tiny pet chocobo Sazh runs to the bow and looks down, as Lightning comes to a graceful landing. Declaring that if she can do it so can they, Sazh follows her down to land albeit somewhat less gracefully.

Lightning runs towards the construct and we get a fade-to-black and we are back as Snow again.

His troops are mostly dead - and Snow's Lieutenant gives him a pep talk that is supposed to restore his morale, pointing out that his girlfriend is in the construct, and it is about time he picked her up! As they continue along the track Snow spots a downed aircraft and declares "There's our ride!" The CS ends with a fade-to-black.

01D: The Fal'Cie Awaits

Hope and Vanille pursue Snow

You appear at the bottom of the rubble pile with your Lieutenant, Gadot - presumably having climbed or jumped down - and nearby there is a treasure globe that holds a Power Circle that boosts the physical power of the person wearing it - so go grab that and equip it now. Around the corner of the rubble is a save point - go ahead and hit that now too, and then look further down the track. See those enemy? Let's go kill them!

The dog we have fought before, but the units with it are hover troops - sort of like Wardens with jetpacks - which is pretty cool if you think about it because they make great targets for grenades! If you did particularly well with that fight - got a high score I mean - you might want to save again just in case.

Run down the track and up the stairs on the left side - at the top of the stairs look right and see the treasure globe, which you can empty of 100 Gil, and then take the stairs on the opposite side to get to some cover near a squad of enemy. Gadot jumps out and starts spraying them with fire, giving a reasonably well-meant growl, and then you jump out and, together, make very short work of them!

Gadot runs ahead and when you catch up to him he is standing by the airship - and it looks a lot smaller than it did a few minutes ago. Use the action button to examine it for a CS of you two taking off in it. What looked like one airship turns out to be two small ones - and you are each at the controls of your own. A brief conversation ensues and then you race each other up to the construct!

The CS changes to you flying and then you land on the deck where the survivors are - and Hope and Vanille put in an appearance. Snow is overly concerned about the safety of the kids, but his NORA troops assure him that all is well. As Hope and Vanille approach so that Hope can talk to Snow, he fires up the aircraft's engine and takes off, ruining Hope's plan to talk to Snow.

As Snow flies away you now become Hope, and Vanille runs along the deck yelling for Snow to wait. You are standing on Skybridge No. 103 in the center of the Hanging Edge district and you are a 14-year-old kid, so hey man, what do you want to do?

Well, before you do anything else run over to the nearby save point and do a save, right? Gadot's airship is sitting on the bridge and Vanille is over by it. Head over and talk to her, and then let her convince you to take her for a ride in the ship! Gadot sees you and starts running to stop you, and you panic and take off!

Just before you take off you worry that if you go up to the construct you might get caught and turned into L'Cie - and that was when I realized we were not already L'Cie! Of course since we know that we will BE L'Cie that sort of removes some of the mystery for what we are going to face, doesn't it?

As you approach the construct the screen fades-to-black and we are prompted to save - which we do.

02A: In Pursuit of Snow

Vanille's new weapon

As we fade in the airship has crashed and after laying on the deck stunned, we come to and discover that we made it to our destination - and Hope begins lecturing to Vanille. Ever the practical ditz, Vanille suggests that they have a look around, and proceeds to find something to play with - and then the pair are confronted by a nice friendly doggie!

The "something" that Vanille found turns out to be her special weapon - and we now get to experience what it is like fighting in high combat with... A fishing pole? Okay I admit it, it was not that bad. The thing does decent damage - but I confess that Vanille wiggled her butt so much I had a hard time watching the doggie and combat!

With the doggie now dead Vanille chirps in her bubbly voice: "Okay! Back to exploring!" and trots off to do just that. As she walks off you should unlock the Achievement/Trophy "Instrument of Dissent" - I love that sound the game makes when you unlock an award - it tells you that you have made progress!

Nearby you is a save point - and now would be a good time to go over and use it, right? If you check the store option you will notice that a new store has been unlocked: B&W Outfitters, and a quick check shows that they do not have much for sale.

-- Achievement / Trophy Warning --

You may be tempted to sell off some of the loot that you have acquired - but before you do that we need to talk about one of the Achievements/Trophies that you can get in the game - if you do not make a mistake here! The Treasure Hunter Achievement/Trophy has some very tough requirements, among which are to have possessed every weapon and accessory in the game. Note that you do not need to have them all at the same time - in fact that would be impossible considering that some are unique and have to be upgraded to progress this quest - but you do have to have had them at one point in the game to unlock this.

Please see Appendix C: Treasure Hunter for the details on this NOW.

Let me repeat that - before you consider selling ANYTHING please read the entry in Appendix C for the Treasure Hunter Trophy / Achievement FIRST. In fact go do that now...

You may also want to review Appendix B as well, since that is a list of all of the Achievements and Trophies with their requirements - and any that are marked with an '*' are ones that are NOT part of the story line and that may require special action on your part. Reviewing them before you get too far into the game would be a good idea.

If obtaining the Achievements or Trophies are not your thing, or you do not care about them, feel free to ignore this warning :)

-- End Trophy Warning --

Use the nearby stairs on the left and you will encounter a dog and three other mobs near a treasure sphere - after you take out the mobs grab the four potions from the sphere and then if you have not already done so, finish off the dogs on the far side of this area.

Take the left side stairs where you entered this area and you will trigger the Aggression and Preemptive Strikes tutorial. Kill the Zwerg droids here and grab the Iron Bangle from the treasure sphere, and then hit the jump point near your crashed aircraft to hop over the rubble there and take on another pair of puppies.

After you take out the puppies run forward for a CS in which Vanille and Hope have a chat, and then they hear Snow yelling for them.

02B: Where Men Fear to Tread

Lightning finds her weapon

Before you do anything else, turn around and run up the steps and grab the 2 potions from the treasure sphere, and then run down and take out the pair of doggies - it should be a pretty quick fight. At the end of the area is a control panel you can activate that moves the platforms so that you can continue - you get a CS to that effect and then another CS featuring Lightning and Sazh.

Lightning eventually convinces the door to open for her and they enter the platform area, triggering the tutorial on Shrouds. As the tut says, shrouds are single-use aerosol kit that can be used outside of battle to grant tactical advantages to the party, that can then be used to enter battle with an advantage preloaded.

Run ahead on the platform to the save point and use it to make the save "Open Door Beckons" and then run a little further to engage the trio of puppies - as long as they are grouped close together use your Blitz attack but once they are separated or you are only facing one of them, switch to your regular attack mode. This should be a relatively short battle since you will get at least three Blitz attacks in before they start dying.

At the top of the stairs are two more puppies and two groups of Zwergs. Take out the group to your left - this is a really short battle requiring only two Blitz attacks - and then empty the treasure sphere that they were guarding for a Tuft of Phoenix Down. The group on the right goes down very fast and then you have to battle the mech unit on the stairs...

This is a Myrmidon - and it is actually able to deal significant damage to you! Plan on having to use a few potions here - you do not want to die and you will if you do not keep an eye on your health. Once you have taken down this mech unit, head to the top of the stairs where you will be attacked by a group of one doggie and a few Zwergs. The Zwergs will die in your first Blitz attack, and the doggie after a few regular attacks.

After the fight go to the treasure sphere near the foot of the stairs and grab the Gadius from it - the Gladius is a Level 1 Gunblade and it is better than the weapon you presently have, so equipping it is an idea.

Head up the stairs and take out the doggie and the mech, and then walk forward to trigger a CS in which Sazh speculates about who might be here.

02C: In the Shadow of L'Cie

Van and Hope confront the result of a failed Focus

Back as Snow again, turn around and run down the stairs of the middle tine in the fork and grab the potion from the treasure sphere here, and then run along the shaft of the fork to the doggie and his pair of Zwergs. A grenade will take out the two Zwergs and a few well-placed knuckle sandwiches will remove the doggie. Activate the control console here to lower the lift platform, and then run on to the platform.

We now get a brief CS of Hope and Van in which they hear Snow's yell that he is coming, and thinking that it is addressed to them, Hope questions the effectiveness of the confrontation that he desires. Van suggests that they could just run away instead of seeking the confrontation, and Hope appears to agree with that.

The CS ends and you are back in control of Van, who is standing on the middle area of the platforms in the Sacarium. There are two Zwerg nearby that you can quickly take out, and then a pair of doggies at the top of the stairs. They drop a Shroud among their spoils which is cool - you know you are picking up good items here!

Now before you take that branching path where the dogs were look at the radar map. Behind you are some more Zwergs so run on up there and take them out, and then grab the vial of Fortisol from the treasure sphere. Back down the stairs as you approach the branching section the large doors ahead open. That is the direction we are supposed to go in, but before we do why not explore the branching paths first?

Starting with the one to our right, there is a treasure sphere with 30 Gil in it - go us! - and in the rear of that area a save point - which we should probably use now!

We have actually been in this area before - earlier - but the mobs have re-spawned, so here is a chance for us to pick up some extra fighting experience and maybe some spoils! Go ahead up there and take out the Zwergs and doggies and then retrace your steps to the branch.

The left branch just leads to the area we were in before so hit the door and you will notice another save point on the right inside this hallway. Use that if you like, then move up to take on the doggies ahead, and once you have killed them grab 100 Gil from the nearby treasure sphere. Nice!

At the bottom of double flight of stairs ahead you get a CS in which you watch some very freaky looking humanoid looking things that are actually L'Cie who have been punished for failing to complete the task that the fal"Cie gave them - you know, tasks whose very nature they were unaware of and the time limit for which they were not told? Yeah, those tasks.

Snow shows up now - luckily for you considering how many L'Cie monsters you are facing - and the battle begins! Considering their young age and relative weakness Hope and Van are actually pretty good fighting partners! A grenade and some beat-down solves the immediate problem, but you have to wonder in the back of your mind if you are going to end up being one of those ghouls some day?

After the fight Hope finally has his confrontation with Snow - sort of - freaking out when he learns that Snow plans to free his girlfriend who is a L'Cie. We learn now that Hope hates Snow now and blames him for his mother's death - and that Snow helping the L'Cie is the last straw. Van on the other hand has a more reasonable approach and convinces Hope to accompany Snow, pointing out that he needs to talk to Snow if he is every going to get closure.

We now cut to a CS with Lightning and Sazh - and we learn why she is here. We do not know yet that the Pulse L'Cie that Lightning is seeking - her sister - is actually the same L'Cie that Snow is seeking! Sazh reviews the onus that has been placed on the L'Cie - the curse - and he tries to prepare her for what he thinks if as the inevitable. He explains that what has been done is a death sentence anyway you look at it, and that there really is nothing that can be done.

Lightning does not want to hear this - but what she wants really does not matter at the moment because there are some L'Cie monsters nearby and we have to kick their butts!

02D: Saving the Enemy

We learn about L'Cie and the Focus

Right, so we should start with the closest enemy - and with Sazh's help we make quick work of them! There is a pair in the short branch so go take them out and grab the Power Wristband from the nearby treasure sphere.

Remember that having an item in your inventory is not the same as actually equipping it! To equip items open your journal and select 'Equipment' and then the character whose kit you want to alter. You can either hit Equip and then select the items you want to equip from your available kit, or you can use the Optimize button and select the strategy you want them kitted out for - Balanced, Offensive, or Defensive. With Sazh I would go with Balanced, but with Lightning I think that Offensive is best... Granted he is the one you will most often need to use potions for anyway, but the Offensive option at least allows Lightning to dish out the best damage rate she can manage.

Heading back you will see that there is a pair of monsters at the top of the stairs off of the first pathway (first left) so you may as well see to them now, right? There are four more at the top of the stairs, and if you engage properly you should begin that fight with a preemptive strike - always a good thing tactically!

Taking on these will be smoother if you do it in groups of one or two, and Sazh is surprisingly more help now - perhaps he is just getting better at fighting skill? It helps you to seize the initiative if you approach the targets from the side or back - that almost guarantees a preemptive strike. At the top of the next stairs (and in the direction we are actually supposed to be going) is another group - take them out and then before you continue on here, head back to the original branch and continue on down.

There are doggies and Zwerg here to fight - may as well get the CP from them - but this is area we covered earlier so the treasure sphere will be already empty. Still it is extra CP so we may as well take advantage of it! With the area now clear head back up to the main path and follow the arrow.

Go through the arch and take out the Ghast here, then run towards the door ahead and you will see a save point on the left by the door that now opens. Hit the save point and make your save. You can access the shops if you want - if you are low on potions you probably should - but as for selling stuff, right now all that we have are some low level weapons and accessories and some crafting components. If you are going for the achievement you do not want to sell low level weapons and accessories and we do not know which resources we will need just yet, so I would hold on to them for now... In fact that is what I did!

When you move through the nearby door we get an area transition, and now we have some new targets to fight! Go ahead and fight your way along this path, taking out the monsters as you encounter them. If you do it right you should get preemptive strikes on most of them, which makes for rather short battles, though the spoils are nothing to write home about.

Keep an eye on Sazh as he takes the brunt of the hits here and may need you to use a potion to keep him alive. After you kill the last pair on the path you step onto a large lift and raise to the next level of the path - at the top of the stairs here you get a CS in which Lightning finds her sister!

Sazh reaches for his pistol - he wants to kill her! As Lightning starts to talk Snow shows up - and Serah comes awake. Just then, Hope and Val show up, and Snow and Lightning have it out. Serah tells them to save Cocoon - and Lightning asks if that was her focus?

02E: The Gift of Eternity

First fal'Cie Battle

Just as they think they have a handle on the situation, Serah is raised by the fal'Cie and turned into a crystal - which as we know is her reward for having completed her task for the fal'Cie!

Wait - so her task (Focus) was to tell us that we needed to save Cocoon? Snow tells us that Serah now has eternal life, but Lightning goes postal in an emotional way, and she and Snow have it out again - only this time it gets physical! Just when you think things cannot get any worse, here comes the army!

They are there to destroy the Pulse Vestige (construct) that you happen to be inside of - which is a problem for you... As the attack hits a lull, Snow decides to have a chat with the fal'Cie - much to Sazh's horror - but before we can really get into that we need to take down the monsters that have arrived to deal with us!

Fight your way up to the top and after you defeat the mobs, grab 5 potions from the treasure sphere and then hit the save point on the other side of the platform.

Enter the tunnel and you get a CS in which you meet a fal'Cie - and Snow tries to argue for Serah's freedom. When argument fails he tries pleading, and then Lightning goes postal on the fal'Cie, explaining that to fulfill Serah's focus they need to kill this fal'Cie. That does not go over very well with the fal'Cie, who opens his protective shields and captures Hope!

Lightning is determined to kill the fal'Cie, though Sazh has his doubts, while Snow was game from the start. This is a boss battle in case you do not know it, and it is not going to be a walk in the park!

Keep a close eye on everyone's health bar and use potions as needed. You should have a minimum of 20 potions going in but more would be better, I am just saying.

- Boss Battle -

Your best strategy here is to keep your eyes on the health bars. Whenever they go yellow use a potion - I know that doing that is contrary to the normal RPG mindset because potions are valuable and usually hard to get, but that is not the case in this game! Potions are valuable, sure, but mostly because of their function rather than rarity. You can buy them from the shops at any save point, so do not be shy about using them!

As you fight the boss you will notice that he makes a predictable set of moves, and once you get the rhythm down you will know when you need to use a potion before you actually need to use it, which makes fighting him pretty much a snap. It is a good idea to set up your moves before the timer fills - once you commit to the target the attack is not going to progress until the timer fills anyway, but having already designated the target the attack will commence immediately after the timer fills instead of having to wait for you to initiate it.

Designating the target prior to the timer filling is important if you want to max out the CP you can get for a given fight - the reason being that CP is indirectly related to the battle rating - how many stars you get - and the main cause for not getting the full five stars in a fight is going over the time designated by the game for when you should have completed it by. Stacking up the commands and having them ready to execute as soon as the timer fills pretty much removes the delays that can cause you to over-run the timer.

This is the first time that you will have a full team of strong fighters - Lightning, Sazh and Snow - and you will immediately see how that works to your advantage here, but bear in mind that unlike previous fights where your teammates activated potions for you, there is no designated medic here for this one - you need to do that yourself!

- End Boss Battle -

If all went well you should have five-starred this fight and completed it well under the Target Time. A score of better than 15K for this battle is acceptable, and you should have received the Doctor's Code as your spoils for this fight!

02F: Pulsian Menace

Snow pop's the question

Unfortunately you did not actually defeat the fal'Cie - and you end up sucked into the L'Cie processor which is very impressive to watch but sadly a one-way trip for you all. As you watch the CS you see the L'Cie marks being applied to each of your team members - but then something goes wrong and the construct begins to break apart.

Val starts to narrate again, and then you get a save game prompt. May as well save, you did complete this section the way you were supposed to...

The next CS fades in - titled 'Day 11: The Seaside City of Bodhum' and as you watch you see humans celebrating - and a nice fireworks display. Snow appears and you see a few of his resistance fighters from before so clearly this is a flashback. Snow walks out onto the pier and we see Serah on the deck - and they start talking. Serah has a bandage upon her arm - which means she has already become L'Cie, and Snow confirms that during their conversation - and Serah seems to have as much trepidation about being turned into a crystal as she does about becoming a monster.

Snow seems like a really stand-up bloke, and he proves it by asking Serah to marry him!

The CS changes to a different view and they are now on a flying bike - and we get a little more detail on the back story - Serah is worried about telling Lightning about being made a L'Cie, while Snow is more concerned about telling her that they are getting married. We get treated to some of the music composed for the game and a series of scenes that are the trademark of the Final Fantasy Series - which is pretty cool if you think about it...

As Snow flies off we are once again prompted to save - do that.

02G: Bound in Darkness

A shared vision of the Focus

We are back with the team - and they are waking up in a new area. Where we are is at Lake Bresha in the Cocoon Lowlands - a crystalline environment that is below the place where the construct was. This may be what is left of the lake that Snow and Serah were at in the flashback?

As they start to piece together what has happened, a L'Cie monster appears and they battle it, quickly putting it down. Snow thinks that Serah must have rescued them - and Lightning still wants to geld Snow because she blames him for Serah being converted to a L'Cie in the first place.

As they fight they all realize that they have been converted into L'Cie - and now the Paradigm Tutorial loads - you should probably go ahead and do this unless you are already familiar with the process.

To review, using Paradigm you can configure your party to maximize strategy for a given fight. You assign specific roles for each party member, which allows you to control what skills and spells they use. Configuring offensive and defensive decks lets you change to a defensive posture and then back to offensive once you are healed much quicker than if you try to manage healing in the party yourself. Presently you are using the Relentless Assault Paradigm - you can shift to a different one like it says, but this is the best one for dealing with the current situation, so maybe not.

Hope is understandably freaked out, and shares his feelings as only a teenager can - but Val kneels down to calm him and we fade-to-black. You should now unlock the 'Instrument of Tragedy' Achievement/Trophy. You will get a bunch of new entries for your journal - may as well take a look at those before you continue playing as they include entries on the Paradigm Deck, Paradigms under the Battle Information Section, info on Lake Bresha, and some extra information on the Cocoon Society.

You will also notice that there is a new selection in the journal - Paradigms - which is where you go to customize, generate, and delete your decks as well as build your Battle Teams.

Head down the slope until you trigger a CS in which you all discuss what your Focus (mission) might be - and it turns out that you all had a similar vision - what the party is called a dream - and that may be the Focus that you have been assigned. Part of the purpose of the discussion in the CS is to fill you in on the back story without actually making it feel like that is what they are doing.

Snow concludes that the meaning of the Focus is connected to what Serah told them before she was transformed into a crystal - that they are to save Cocoon. They refer to Cocoon in the feminine, which I suppose makes sense considering the cultural point of view in Japan... Now that he has made up his mind about the Focus, Snow heads off and we get a mini-tutorial about the side-effects of being turned into L'Cie, which include unlocking the ability to level up (Yay us!).

You should do this tutorial if you have not already learned how to interact with the CP system, since it is kind of important, right?

Crystarium Tutorial

As you can see, a new entry has been added to the journal menu below the Paradigms selection for the Crystarium - the interface that we will use to spend the CP we have acquired in battles in order to improve upon and add new abilities, magic power, and HP.

The individual interfaces have a lot of information on them - starting with the jobs that we know (and can develop) and our current levels for each of these - which include Ability, HP, Strength, and Magic. If you look at Lightnings Commando job and then compare it to her Ravager job you will see that Commando is much more developed -

which makes sense as that is what she was from the start of play.

Selecting Commando shows you the different known abilities, which are represented by being lit, and the as yet unlearned abilities, which are represented by unlit crystals. You can select the jobs that you want to advance in for each of the five and use what CP they have to advance them, following the logical paths now.

That pretty much covers leveling up - now you need to go out and grind CP to get your party to the point where they are more of a danger to the enemy than to themselves!

- End Crystarium Tutorial -

An interesting point - the vision that they each had included the Summoned being Ragnarok - a summons that Val will eventually be given the Focus for according to the canon.

Before you continue on from here load your journal and take a look at the Battle Primers - new sections have been added for all five jobs, and it would be an idea to read these prior to committing your CP so that you have a better notion of what they are, and by extrapolation, who is best suited to follow what upgrade path for leveling.

03A: Branded

Leveling jobs

Now that you have all of the housekeeping out of the way, continue along the path and hit the jump point - there are enemy nearby but before you go kill them, see that save point ahead? Right, head over to it and save the game! If you check the shops you will notice that B&W Outfitters has some new items for sale.

If you leveled your party - you should have - you will now notice that they have more action points and can execute longer chains of attacks - pretty cool! Lightning can now stack regular attacks with her special attacks which is also pretty spiffy!

The fight will not last long thanks to the extended attack power and HP of your party members, and if you check Lightnings stats you will notice that she picked up 15CP just from fighting that one mob!

Along the path ahead you will notice a treasure sphere - go ahead and grab the Pearlwing Staff from it. The Pearlwing Staff is a weapon that boosts the spiritual abilities of whoever is using it, though its stats are lower than the weapons you presently have equipped.

Head back to the save point and past it to continue on our route now and fight the next group of monsters.

-- Grinding Notice --

You have now reached the point in the game where you can build and use CP and therefore level your jobs. You can keep right on going along the adventure here if you like, and let the CP come on its own, however if you want to have an edge in the battles ahead this is your first convenient grind spot (I will be noting grind spots throughout the adventure).

If you want to use this area for some CP grinding you need to take out the second group of mobs and then return to the save point and save. Now pause and then exit to the main menu, and load your last save - the two groups of mobs have now re-spawned and can be killed again for roughly 50CP total.

While 50 CP does not sound like a lot, bear in mind that you cannot progress to Level 2 in any of the jobs until you get further into the game, and having all of the Level 1 jobs maxed out will make your path much smoother as you will have significantly increased your HP, Magic, and moves!

Some of the characters - Snow for instance - will quickly cap off their skills at Level 1, which means they will be building a reserve of CP that will give them a big jump when you unlock Level 2. For now concentrate on getting the skills for all of the jobs on your weakest player capped off. When you finish them you should have built a reserve on most of the others.

-- End Grind Spot --

If you chose to grind here you spent the last 35 minutes capping the Level 1 jobs for all five of the characters, which means that Snow should have a CP reserve of between 800 and 900, Sazh should have a little over 100, and the rest of the party a handful each. Excellent! You have something of a jump on Level 2 now, and any battles you have between here and the raise are gravy!

Before you continue down the upper path look on the right in the area where the second group was and you will spot a treasure sphere on top of a ledge - you can jump up there so go ahead and do that now and empty the sphere before we continue along!

At the end of the path is a shattered bridge with strategically placed jump points that allow you to cross it. On the other side you get a CS in which Snow gives you the benefit of his wisdom - offering a rather circular approach to

the matter. Sazh on the other hand is the team pessimist, and declares that rather than being heroes we are in fact villains.

03B: A Vision Shared

Serah found and Paradigm tut

In the middle of this argument a squad of soldiers show up - and their leader makes the mistake of getting a little too close to Lightning. Ninja skills kick in and it turns into an all-out melee that happens to be when we get the tutorials for Command Execution and ATB. If you have not already figured this out you should probably do the tutorial...

This is actually a pretty short battle but it shows you how to mix up your stack, and eventually as you get to know how the different attacks work, should help you stack sympathetic commands. The CS that follows is - I think - one of the more amusing in the game, especially Van's reaction.

In the shallow alcove on the right is a treasure sphere with some Gil - so grab that now - and then continue along the path to the next clearing where you fight a mixed group of ground and air mobs. You might notice that the CP for these encounters is getting a little better - that is because the mobs are getting a little stronger.

There is another treasure sphere in the alcove that branches here - empty that and continue along the path until you come to a section of frozen lake and a group of mobs we have never encountered before - these are Breshan Bass (listed under Enemy Intel/Feral Creatures/Terraquatics in your journal). Breshan Bass are Level 12 mobs that are a sort of mix between frogs, fish, and ugly - but they give halfway decent XP so why not take advantage of that and kill them? Yeah!

There is a small cul-de-sac area on the left side of the path with a second group worth an easy 32CP if you want the extra CP - I did - and the bonus is a treasure sphere with a Silver Bangle in it! Once you loot that you can go into the Equip menu and give it to someone - I decided that Snow was the obvious person for it, and while we are on that subject, I gave Van the Iron Bangle that Snow was previously wearing - you did have Van equip the Pearlwing Staff, right? Assuming that you capped off the Level 1 jobs Hope is now as skilled a Medic as Van, which means you can have him equip the Doctor's Code so that it doesn't go to waste.

Now that we have updated our kit it is time to move on! Ahead on the path on the right is a save point - we really should use that now.

On the other side of the bridge ahead Snow initiates a sharing of infos - you know, introductions? This triggers a CS in which Snow and Sazh have a conversation about the kids and the reality of their situation; Sazh really is a pessimist when you come right down to it, whereas Snow plays the optimist to balance out the relationship. I am not really sure where Lightning comes into this - maybe she is the mad-crazy-gone-postal chick?

Up a steep slope from here is a pack of our old friends the puppies! Killing them is almost as fun as playing with them, and the payoff is come CP and a treasure sphere with a Phoenix Down in it - yay! Say, have you noticed that there do not seem to be any towns in this game outside of the ones we see in the CS's? That is rather odd for an RPG...

After the second doggy fight there is a sphere with 8 vials of Strange Fluid in the alcove on the left, and if you run towards the one on the right you will jump up to the ledge where there is some wreckage and Snow asks if it is from the Vestige (construct)? I believe it is safe to assume that it is - in fact logically that would explain the sphere's being out here in the middle of nowhere as well as a lot of the mobs, who are, like us, survivors of its destruction.

Ahead on the left is a sphere with a pair of Magician's Marks in it, and along the path to the right up the bits of wreckage is another save point - which we should use.

As you go down the other side of the wreckage you get a brief CS in which Lightning finds Serah's Crystalline form. Snow grabs a bit of wreckage and starts to free her from the ice - and the others jump in to help - when Lightning gets a vision from her sister. Serah tells her that this is goodbye - and then Lightning starts to leave - and Snow freaks out.

Lightning tunes up on Snow for a bit, trying to beat some sense into him, and then Sazh wanders off and gets spot-lighted by the enemy. It is time to fight again - but first it is time for another tutorial! Bet you were not expecting that!

-- Paradigm Tutorial II --

You are about to face a boss mob - and to do that without dying requires you to use the Paradigm deck to strategically alter your party play in order to take advantage of the different ability strengths of the members. The idea here is to put the enemy into Staggered condition so that your attacks do higher damage to it. To do that you need to switch to an offensive Paradigm - in this case the Relentless Assault one.

If you start taking bad damage you should shift to a defensive Paradigm like Solidarity, so that your medic can heal everyone.

Once the enemy's chain gauge is depleted shift back into Relentless Assault if you have not done so already and finish him off! You should only need to change to a defensive deck once - the battle should end pretty quick after you switch back to offensive and the chain gauge is depleted.

-- End Tutorial --

The reward (in spoils) for this kill is a Digital Circuit - which is new loot for us. After the battle ends you return to the CS about Serah - Snow is still insisting that they help her, but Sazh convinces him that logic dictates that they return later with the proper gear. Lightning points out the fallacy in Snow's argument in a more direct way, and Snow finally comes around. Snow is parting ways with the group, determined to help Serah, and Hope tries to have the conversation with Snow that he has been putting off all along, and fails again.

03C: Partings and Promises

Behemoth Battle

As we leave Snow we get a system notice for the change in grouping for fights. You may want to optimize kit again - Val can use the Binding Rod that we just picked up, and Hope can use the Magician's Mark, both of which are reasonable trade-offs for stats.

After a good long run we reach a bridge with some more Bass on it - and kill them! On the path to the right on the bridge is a sphere with 6 vials of Strange Fluid, and on the path continuing down there are some doggies for us to fight. There are basically three paths you can take from here - all of them using jump points.

The bottom path: Follow the left path down from the bridge battle, take out the doggies, and continue down on the left path to the bottom, use the jump point and cross the long span to the other side where you find a pair of treasure spheres - one with 240 Gil, the other with a pair of Deneb Duelers (Level 1 Dual Pistols). This is a dead end so head back up now.

The middle path: Just past the doggie fight, use the jump point and cross the span and you are ambushed by a pack of Bass.

The top path: This is just a shortcut to the middle path that might allow you to avoid fighting the doggies if you wanted to - but why would you want to?

If you have Sazh configured for Balanced kit then he will continue to use his regular pistols but if you configure him for Offensive kit he will use the new set you found on the bottom path, which do slightly more damage.

After you cross the middle path but before you continue along the main path go to the right and you will see a jump point - take that to reach the lower area here and a pack of Bass for you to kill. Once they are all dead empty the treasure sphere here for 5 vials of Enigmatic Fluid, and then go back across the span to the main path as this is a dead end.

On the main path you will encounter another pack of doggies in the shallow split that branches off on the right side - after you kill them empty the treasure sphere of the 7 Wicked Fangs it holds, and then cross the bridge where you find a dead end. Van yells for you, waving to get your attention - she has found a cannon - though Hope thinks it is beyond use.

Run back across the bridge and examine the weapon, which causes it to fire, blowing away the debris that blocks the path across the bridge. Excellent! And bonus! Blowing open the pass released a bunch of Bass for us to kill on the bridge! This just keeps getting better and better!

Now that the pass is open and you have killed the Bass, head on through and use the save point on the other side, and then follow Sazh to confront a behemoth boss and another tutorial - this one on Techniques. As always, if you do not feel that you have that subject down cold, you should do the tutorial...

This was not a hard battle at all for me - but I paused a while back and capped off all of my Level 1 jobs... One of my mates who is also playing the game did not, and reports that this was a rather lengthy battle for him, and it required more than a few potions for him to get through it, whereas I did not have to use any. Getting those jobs capped is a good idea - so if you have not already done it, maybe you should consider doing it now?

Fight the puppies to the side and then loot the Libra Scope before you continue along the path to the bed, where you trigger another CS - and spot a military ship that has landed, and the forces it has deployed who are hunting down survivors.

03D: Casting the Net

New amphibians

A conversation now takes place that gives a little more background on the situation and our status as L'Cie. Van takes over as the designated optimist, and then we get buzzed by a squadron of fighters and Lightning urges us to get going.

As you progress along the path you will have a few encounters - you know how to deal with those by now. After you take out the trio of bots that look a lot like Deoxsys from the Pokemon games you should loot the pair of Digital Circuits from the sphere on the right path before you continue on to the jump points ahead and climb the mountain here.

About mid-way up you will see some rubble to the right with a jump point that diverges from the path - take that to the ledge above and empty the treasure sphere of its 2 flasks of Paraffin Oil, and then take the 50 Gil from the next sphere before continuing along the path up. At the top you get jumped by a mixed patrol, and then if you head to the right and up you find the next save point - which you should use now.

As you move past the save point you trigger another CS in which you get a panoramic view of the area and then Sezh and Van have a chat about being crystals, and then we have an awkward conversation with Lightning about her sister Serah before resuming the path.

A fair way up there is a treasure sphere with 30 Gil, and a bit after that another sphere with a half-dozen Begrimed Claws in it. Just a bit further and you reach a set of stairs, mid-way up them is a save point which you may as well use now. You may want to check your kit and supplies now as well, since this is a good time to replenish potions if you have been using them up. See if you have any better weapons or kit for your team to use as well.

It would be a good time for you to grab a beverage IRL - my wife just brought me a big glass of Neuman's Own Lime Aid which is some wicked good stuff, but you drink what you like...

At the top of the stairs is another Alpha Behemoth - now I bet you are glad you had that drink, right? Well, you should make short work of this one - use Libra to scope it out and then combo it into the dirt! Excellent! Before you move ahead check that alcove to the right and grab 600 Gil from the sphere there.

At the top of the next area there is a mixed group of Watchdrones (the Deoxsys looking things) and a PSICOM Ranger - you may want to give the Ranger priority as a target since he can sit back on the edge of the fight and take pot-shots at you that can hurt, I am just saying...

To the right of the fight area is a sphere with a pair of Digital Circuits in it, and to the left is a jump spot to take you further along the path. As you reach the top here there is a jump spot straight ahead and a set of stairs to the right. At the first landing off of the stairs to the right there is an alcove with a treasure sphere in it that has 6 Begrimed Claws in it that you should grab, and then either continue down the stairs or use the jump spot above.

If you use the jump spot you can get behind the Crusader Mech to get a preemptive strike in, which is always nice. Otherwise you will go head-to-head with the mobs in the plaza here. Either way keep an eye on your health bars because the Crusader packs a good punch if it concentrates on a single party member.

There is a second Crusader here backed up by a trio of PSICOM so again, mind your health bars and try to take out the PSICOM first so that they cannot sit on the sidelines and take pot-shots at you, then take out the Crusader! There is a treasure sphere in the corner on the left with a Spark Ring - and at the end of the hall after the long steep stairs is another sphere with some potions in it.

At the top of the next stairs is a save point - use that and then take a look around. On the rubble near the save point is a spot you can examine that will permit you to climb over the wreckage here - and Val will remark that it looks

like you can get through here. Before you do that, notice that there are some puppies a little further down the hall? Be an idea to take them out first before you continue on, right?

Moving deeper into this area prompts an attack by a pair of PSICOM Rangers and a PSICOM Executioner - but they are pretty easy to take down. Follow the hall deeper in and you get jumped by another group for an easy 25CP and a nugget of Millerite!

Just past the sphere is a fairly large mixed group to take on - keep an eye on the health bars because if they all concentrate on one of your party you could easily lose them. Nearby is a group of low-level puppies for you to massacre, and that brings you to the area on the other side of the wreckage that you would have reached if you had taken the short cut. But of course you would not have gotten the CP and spoils not to mention the Millerite had you done that, so no regrets, right mate?

If you like you can go over the wreckage real quick and hit the save point again - it is never a bad idea to save your progress after all!

Back on the other side again if you look to the right you will see a flight of stairs - at the top of which is some enemy and a sphere - kill them and grab the Ferroelectric Film from the sphere and then use the jump point to drop down on the enemy below - which is the same group you would face anyway if you had followed the path instead of going up the stairs. One of the enemy here is a PSICOM Executioner - they are always fun to kill!

03E: The Only Way is Up

Boss fight with a Garuda Interceptor

Now continue along the path up the stairs to the next save point and use it, and then grab the Phoenix Down from the nearby sphere, and the pair of Librascopes from the sphere on the other side of the stairs. Now just go up a few of the stairs to trigger the next CS in which you walk through the plaza while Val appears to be having an orgasmic good time! Sadly this does not last, as you are attacked by a boss mob called a Garuda Interceptor. You did save a minute ago, right?

I would start this fight by using Libra on it to ID it, and then begin attacking. Once you do enough damage the Garuda will fly away to charge up its energy - this is good and bad. Good since you did some damage, but bad because it will drop a glowing black ball of energy on you once it has charged up. You do not want your health bar in the yellow when that happens, so be sure you are healed up. The ball will do a fair bit of damage, so be prepared to heal after the attack as well.

Keep pressing the attack - you want to force it to continuously fight you to prevent it from recharging. You should be able to kill it without having to face another attack from its special weapon. Once you have succeeded in killing it part of your reward is the expansion of the Crystarium! That's right, you can now develop your Level 2 skills in each job that you have! Not only that, but Sazh gets Synergist added to his jobs list, and Van gets Saboteur added to hers.

Of the two, Van's new job is probably the more important - chances are pretty good that you will want to keep Sazh employed as a Raveger...

You get a CS in which Val dances about, happy to have found an airship! Sazh puts on his pessimist cap and Lightning stays silent (for once), and then you are prompted to save the game - do that. Chances are you have burned through a fair number of your potions, and you have picked up more kit in spoils, so now would be a good time to review all of that to see what needs tending.

03F: The Twin Sisters

Shiva Eidolon Battle

After the save we get a CS of Snow and his efforts to free Serah - he gets buzzed by enemy fighters, and chooses to ignore them. Sadly they do not choose to ignore him and a large number of troopers drop down - you give it your best shot the only way you know how, but knuckle sandwiches are not the solution here! Thankfully your Eidolon know what to do - and they do it! Snow meet the Shiva Twins, Shiva Twins meet Snow!

As this is our first personal use of the Eidolon we are treated to the Tutorial for them - and you should probably do this unless you already know about them. Now before you celebrate too much, since we are newly made L'Cie we do not actually have control over our Eidolon yet! We have to win that by defeating them - which is explained in the tutorial. Do that now :)

Okay chances are that you failed this battle... Mostly because you had Snow set to his Commando job. While you want him set as Commando when you deal with the PSICOM goons, once you are done with them and are fighting the Eidolon that is the worse mode you can be in!

You want him set to Sentinel for the Shiva fight because the object is not to dish out damage but rather to fill the Gestalt bar - so after you finish off the PSICOM and start the Eidolon fight switch to Sentinel, and then Autocover Nix but do not engage until just as she is about to attack you. Once she starts her attack, engage with Steelguard!

After the attack she will retreat to recharge her ATB, at with point you should use Libra on her and then go to Autocover again and wait for her to attack again, and use Steelguard. The Gestalt meter connected to her is filling - slowly but it IS filling. The timer is also ticking down, but if you do this and then rinse and repeat you will fill the bar way before the timer runs out, I promise.

Now once the bar is filled, trigger Gestalt and Shiva will combine into the motorcycle form that is her Gestalt mode. You have won! Good on ya mate! You now control your first Eidolon! And don't you wish that the other Eidolon fights were going to be this easy?

Part of your reward for this battle is an additional ATB segment for your ATB bar, plus of course you can now control Shiva. As you fall to the ground you are approached by a woman - one you do not know - who basically takes you prisoner.

We cut to a CS of military troops - you and Serah are now their prisoners. The woman who took you prisoner seems to be in charge of the troops... Things are not looking good for Snow and Serah are they?

And now we cut back to the main party and a CS of them taking off in the airship - and escaping the area. It is a real white knuckle ride as Lightning fights with Sazh for control of the ship. Instead of trying to fight them one-on-one Sazh uses the cliff sides to take them out. Just after you escape them a news broadcast pops up on the instrument panel.

The newscaster announces the success - and completion - of the purge. Of course the purge is not the death march that it actually was, rather it was the "relocation" program that the powers that be say it was. As the broadcast ends you are attacked by another group of fighters, and Sazh flies towards the fal'Cie sanctuary above. This doesn't turn out to be a sanctuary at all! In fact the fal'Cie attacks you and our ship is sent spiraling down towards the ground trailing smoke!

The game now prompts us for a save - so let's do that.

We have crashed in the Vile Peeks - and there are a bunch of doggies here to greet us! As everyone wakes up the doggies attack, and we are forced to defend ourselves. Fortunately these are fairly low-level doggies so it is not much of a fight!

Lightning starts to march away and Sazh protests - telling her that they need a break. Hope takes off with Lightning and Sazh and Van lag behind. Van gives Sazh a pep talk, and Hope climbs an engine-looking thingy. As they get up to leave we get an Achievement/Trophy unlock - Instrument of Flight - which as you probably know, signals the end of a chapter! Yay us!

04A: Nothing but Grief

The party splits up

As we run along the path the bridge breaks apart leaving us stuck, and then we cut to a flashback CS of the night of the fireworks, only this one features Van.

As she watches the fireworks in the Seaside Village of Bodhum (Day 11) we also see Lightning in the crowd. Her Lieutenant walks by to tell her that she is off-shift, that PSICOM found something nearby and they want the military out of the area. There is a mix of good news, but of course we know that the purge is coming, so the good news is tempered by the approaching doom. Sigh.

Hope joins Lightning and we get a mini-tutorial on Hope's Synergist job. In fact now is a good time to go ahead and use some of the CP we have stored up to upgrade our abilities, right? Open the interface and start the upgrading! You may notice that we are still Level 1 on our jobs - but in Stage 2 of Level 1, which means we can increase them further. With the amount of CP we have banked we can almost max out all of the jobs for Hope and Lightning, and with a little bit of grinding we should be able to completely cap them with minimal effort here.

Directly ahead of us is a save point - so go ahead and use it!

In an alcove near the save point there is a treasure sphere and a doggie - you have to jump over some rubble to get to it. Go there, kill the doggie, and grab the Librascope from the sphere, and then leave the alcove. Since you are near the save point go ahead and load it and click on Shop - well what do you know! We have a new store available - Up in Arms - and there are new items at B&W Outfitters too!

As you follow the path you fight a group of puppies and then, using a series of jump points, cross over the rubble to fight a trio of Watchdrones. Around the bend are two more drones and a puppy, and just beyond them is a Pulsework Soldier - which is a new mob for us.

04B: I wanna be purged

Boarding the Train

When you reach the bottom of the rubble pile ahead you get a CS in which you appear to be encountering a dead end. Hope and Lightning have a conversation in which she explains the division of authority between her former military bosses and PSICOMN. They talk about the purge and we get a CS within the CS of the boarding of the train.

This is actually pretty cool in that we get to see Sazh and Lightning meeting for the first time, and we have a better understanding of why things went the way that they did on the train. Hope seems stunned that Lightning cared so much for Serah that she got on the train willingly, and makes a flip comment, and then Lightning leaves.

Back to Sazh and Van - and Sazh's chocobo! Van takes the lead here and starts climbing over the rubble, at which point we get a mini-tutorial on Sazh's new job - Synergist. There is a save point here, and now is a good time to apply any CP you have not applied before you save! If you have been following this walkthrough you should have more than enough CP to cap off both of Sazh's jobs to their Stage 2 levels, and Van's too, with a few hundred CP left over!

Ahead of you through the tunnel is a Pulsework Soldier fighting three drones - but hey, they are ALL your enemy, so go help them get dead! Sort of interesting that these guys are fighting each other... I don't know whether it is just that these are the weaker of the team or what, but that Soldier took a lot of killing! But he also gave decent CP so it all evens out in the end.

Your path is blocked here - so use the machine to move the blockage and then go play with the puppies on the other side! There is another Soldier here already playing with the puppies so I suggest concentrating on him first and then switch your deck to have Van healing as you take out the puppies. If you capped your skills this should be a relatively easy fight.

The next fight is a mix of puppies and drones versus a Soldier - and in this one I would concentrate first on the puppies then on the Soldier and finally the drones. For all the work you put in the 91CP for this fight does not seem like a lot to me, but there you have it. After the fight be sure to grab the Black Belt from the Treasure Sphere.

Go through the tunnel and use the control panel to clear the rubble, and then you will engage a trio of puppies fighting a pair of Soldiers. I chose to concentrate on the puppies and then the Soldiers, considering that there were more of them, and that left them damaging the Soldiers longer. Once the puppies are down to two and weakened, switch to the Soldiers to make it an easier and faster fight.

04C: Hope and Despair

Hope's Story

As you progress from here you get a CS of your meet-up with Hope at the barrier - a very frustrated and annoyed Hope. A very cheerful Van tries to comfort him and that leads to a CS of Hope at the fireworks! Man, was everyone at those fireworks or what?! So Hope has father issues - big surprise there, considering his attitude. A little more insight into Sazh though it is brief, and then he finds the way to move the crane to allow the party to climb over the barrier - excellent!

Using the jump points you do that - note though, the path behind you between here and the last save point has roughly 225CP or more worth of fights, so if you did not grind CP to cap off your jobs this would be a good place to quickly do that! Now, over the barrier we go!

At the top we find ourselves confronted by another Soldier unit - go ahead and take him out. If you have trouble with this fight consider changing your deck to Thermourgy for this fight as that will give you a pair of Ravagers and a Medic to keep them healed!

After the fight grab the Ninurta out of the Treasure Sphere - this is a weapon not a component, so if you are going for the Achievement/Trophy you should remember to grab this, and then hit the save point just ahead.

Ahead is a battle with a single Pulsework Soldier, and then head to the left of the door and jump up to face a new mob type - Incubus - and then continue on to trigger a CS. We get a little history lesson that helps to explain what all this rubble is doing here, and then fight another pair of Incubus. After that we head up to the next area and take on a Soldier and another Incubus for an easy 55CP and then have another mixed fight with an Incubus and Soldier.

After the fight circle up to the left and grab a Phoenix Down from the first sphere, and a Metal Armband from the second before you hit the conveniently placed save point here!

04D: Taking in the Trash

Rejoining Lightning

From here we have a battle with a pair of Incubus and a Succubus - you may want to change your deck to Thurmaturgy for this fight - they can hit pretty hard if they are all targeting the same party member. You can leave your deck set this way if you like, but if you do you will not complete the fight within the projected time period, so switching back between offensive and healing decks is probably the way to go here.

If you have not realized this yet, when facing mobs with strong HP and armor your best tactic is to use the deck - shift to variety to increase the meter to stagger and then to medic as needed - once you have the target staggered go to an all-offensive deck for the quick kill.

Follow the path and complete the fights until you reach the next save point and use that. Just past the save point you get a CS in which you reunite with Lightning and the Battle Team changes. Work your way along the path doing the battles until you reach the gap, where you use the controls to deploy the metal stairs and cross up. Use the save point at the top of the stairs, and then continue on along the path.

04E: Fugitive in Futility

Pulse Armament Boss Fight

Ahead of you is an easy fight and a treasure sphere with a Librascope in it. Another easy fight and a sphere with an Ember Ring - which is one of the rare accessories you want to make sure you get and do not sell - and onward we go! There is a save point ahead that you should use before continuing on.

After the save point we get a CS in which a very large mob is introduced to us - a Pulse Armament - which should present a challenging fight for you! Once you do a certain amount of damage the fight shifts to a brief CS and the thing fires a shot at the deck destroying it and causing you to fall down into a lower level underground!

This was a tough fight but if you experiment a little you can see that your mix of decks can work really well against it. The payoff for killing this boss mob is a very spiffy 360CP and spoils that include Lenora's Garage Shop and an Omni-Kit!

In addition to the above we also get our Crystarium expanded again, and Lightning picks up the Medic Job, while Sahz learns the Commando job! Excellent!

The post-fight CS gives us some information about the party's take on the situation - Lightning is a pragmatist and Hope is still something of a pessimist - go figure.

Now that we have an Omni-Kit we can finally start upgrading our weapons and accessories - Woo Hoo! We do that at Save Stations (save points) which is cool - but bear in mind that you need to be really cautious about how you upgrade your kit, right? There are plenty of upgrading guides available on the web - and I seriously suggest that you avail yourself of one or more of them so that you do not make mistakes that you will regret.

I will be including the upgrade decisions that I make here - you can follow them if you like - but I want to stress that upgrading your kit is not just a good idea, it can make all the difference in battles! You can also scrap unwanted gear and recover components from it - which is fine if you have duplicates of items and you do not want to sell them, but care should be taken in deciding what to scrap and what to sell.

Now is a good time to spend some of the CP we have been banking and upgrade our jobs - with what you have banked you should be able to upgrade Sazh's Ravager job to nearly the full 3rd Stage of Level 1 and I recommend that you do that now - yes he has other jobs but Ravager is what we use him for most, and we will be doing some grinding in a minute anyway for the other jobs so having that one capped makes sense. He is only a few upgrade crystals from Level 2 for this job, but making it as strong as you can now will help in the grinding we are about to do...

For Lightning Commando is obviously the priority, and you will actually upgrade it to Level 2 if you completely upgrade its Stage 3 path! Once you do that you can apply whatever is left over to one of her other jobs if you like - we will be back to this in a bit.

For Van just use the points as you like, and for Hope you should have enough to take Ravager to full Level 2 and have a little left over to apply to one of his other jobs.

Now that we have that done head along the path through the long sloping tunnel and hit the save point! Remember, save FIRST before you try upgrading your weapons so that if you make a mistake you can reload and not really have lost anything. If you find an upgrade you like, save that before you continue so you do not end up forgetting what you chose :)

04F: Eden or Bust

A new path is chosen

Following the path past the save point triggers a CS in which Lightning points out our next destination: Eden. Sazh's is horrified - the very idea of taking the fight that far into the enemy stronghold sounds like pure insanity to him! Unfortunately Lightning has decided that this is the only way to make progress, and that taking this fight right to the door of the enemy is the only choice that she has.

On the bright side there is every chance that, in the process, they might be able to uncover the truth about the purge that started all of this. Ultimately it is the fal'Cie that Lightning wants to target - and while Sazh thinks this is madness, and Van is freaked at the idea of not following their Focus, Lightning is hell bent on taking on the bad guys and she considers Snow to be one of them now.

As Van serves as narrator, we see the party breaking up once again, and Hope... Well, Hope wants Snow dead anyway, so he votes to help Lightning with her choice. Sazh and Van, not so much. Lightning marches away, determined to begin the journey to what she considers her destiny, and Hope follows after her. Van and Sazh hang back - clearly they do not want to do it, and who could blame them?

Just as Hope catches up to Lightning they are attacked by a unit of PSICOM, who blow the wreckage over the passage that they came in by, trapping them on the plateau. There is no choice but to fight... But in the process of the fight Lightning changes her mind about Hope - deciding that he may just be a worthy ally after all!

Their path will take them through Hope's home town on their way to Eden, but before any of that move forward and hit the save point ahead. If you did not upgrade Hope's Kit now would be the time to do that!

We need to cap off our jobs which means that we need to grind - but to do that efficiently we need some enemy spawns that are conveniently close to a save point and that have value to them. Unfortunately that is not here...

Follow the path taking out the mobs you encounter - grab the 3 strands of fiber optic from the sphere and continue on to the next sphere to get a Librascope and then use the next save point.

As you progress past the save point you get a CS of some PSICOM units, and then Hope disobeys you and plays with the Pulse Mech Unit that the PSICOM were guarding. Using the mech he knocks over the wreckage to create a bridge that will allow you to pass through the area! This triggers a mini-tutorial on the Pulse Mech - which it seems we now get to play with!

This is what you call a mixed blessing - yes it lets us take out large numbers of enemy troops, but we do not earn CP from doing so - or loot. After a short ride in the mech we end up wrecking it anyway, and we are back on foot. Empty the two spheres here - one with a Spark Ring, the other with 100 Gil. Hey, money is always welcome and that ring is one of the rarer items we are seeking!

Ahead in a tunnel is a sphere with 2 Electrolytic Capacitors, and just beyond that is our next save point!

Hope remarks that the road splits ahead - it doesn't really - and if you take the upper route there is a sphere with another Spark Ring in it! Grab that and then head back down to the main path and take out the group of enemy ahead - continue on the path to the right and grab the Phoenix Down from the sphere there before you hop down on to the main path and take out the mobs there.

Now hit the next save point - which is very close - and then you can decide if you want to grind this stretch. There are enough mobs between these two save points to make it worth the grind - it is your call. Grinding really cannot

be avoided in this game if you plan on leveling your jobs - and one way to look at it as a necessary chore is to break it up like this, grinding in small sections and amounts as you need to rather than waiting until there is a huge gap and spending hours of teeth gritting repetition... I decided that this was worth the delay of half an hour of grinding to avoid hours later in the level, just so you know.

The quickest way to do this is to reload at the save point to cause the mobs to re-spawn, fight your way back to the previous save point, save and reload, rinse and repeat. You should not be using potions while you grind as that sort of defeats the purpose of making progress here with loot and Gil - ideally when you need to heal you will simply change your deck to dual healers - which will quickly restore your health in seconds without burning up resources - and then quickly switch back to your offensive deck. Get into the habit of doing this - it will save you time and money and become second nature so that later, when it matters, you do it without even thinking about it.

Grinding it this way it will take less than 30 minutes to get the CP you need to cap off all of the jobs, and you end up with Lightning at Level 2 Commando, Level 2 Ravager, and Medic to Level 1 with an additional Accessory Slot unlocked as well. For Hope you end up with Ravager, Synergist, and Medic at Level 2 also with an extra Accessory Slot unlocked, but for Hope that slot unlocks from Synergist not Medic. Having the extra Accessory Slots is a big deal both for combat and for stats.

04G: Thunderous Hooves

Odin Eidolon Fight

After you complete the grind make sure that you equip an item in both of their extra Accessory slots before you proceed along the path! Also you should edit your Paradigm Decks now, because you have a fight coming up that requires some tweaking - and requires another configuration to add to the ones you have now.

You currently should have:

- Slash & Burn: Commando Ravager
- Supersoldier: Comando Synergist
- Double Dose: Medic Medic
- Dualcasting: Ravager Ravager

You want to add the following to your decks:

- War & Peace: Commando Medic
- Symbiosis: Medic Synergist

As soon as you add that 5th deck, go ahead and proceed on the path past the save point to trigger a CS of you crossing the bridge - and laying in to Hope for his weakness. This is so unlike you that clearly something is wrong - and if the pulsing red light from your L'Cie mark is not clue enough - well, something IS wrong!

Your Eidolon is Odin, and he now asserts himself, trying to kill Hope. Thanks to your quick reflexes you manage to stop him, but the fight is now on! Fortunately you have capped all your jobs, which will make this a lot easier than it might have otherwise been.

To simplify this fight please do the following:

- Set Battle Speed to Slow in the Settings Menu
- Cast the Aegisol Shroud
- Cast the Fortisol Shroud
- Cross the bridge to start the CS and battle
- Use Libra on Odin
- Put your Deck in War & Peace
- When Odin uses Ular's Shield switch Deck to Dualcasting
- When Odin starts to attack switch Deck back to War & Peace
- Rinse and repeat the last two steps...

This strategy should allow you to take him out without having to recast Shell and Protect, but if for whatever reason you lose those buffs you need to switch to Symbiosis and wait for Hope to cast them again because without them, well, this is not a battle it is suicide! The trick to this fight is not wasting any time at all - be fluid in switching, pay attention to Odin's mode so you go into Dualcasting as soon as he starts Ular's Shield otherwise you will not build up enough to make this work!

Once you have the Gestalt bar filled TRIGGER IT! That ends the fight, and while that may be obvious to you now, I sat and watched one of my mates fail this fight because he was paying total attention to the Stagger meter and not the Gestalt bar! He could have ended and won the fight with well over 1500 left on the clock and he never hit the Gestalt button!

Using the method I outline above you should have no trouble at all 5-starring this fight, just remember to switch the speed back to normal when you are done...

That was a tough fight, wasn't it? Nothing like Snow's :) Aren't you glad that is over? After the fight Lightning gets an additional ATB segment, and Hope remarks that her L'Cie brand looks different. Hope brings up the harsh words that Lightning used earlier - and she apologizes. Whew. Go ahead and use that conveniently placed save point behind us to save now.

As you move through the canyon on the other side of the bridge you trigger a CS and a tutorial on how to enter Gestalt Mode with an Eidolon - you should probably do this Tutorial right?

It explains about using TP to summon Odin, and has you summon him. I think this was a pretty impressive, but Odin does not last through the entire battle because we do not have that big a reserve of power - yet. Once you are back in the fight Hope pops in, and you know what to do from there!

When you finish the fight you decide to take a rest here. The CS that follows shows you a softer side of Lightning than you might have thought existed, but have no fear, she still has some cynic in her :) We are now promoted to save - do that.

04H: Loathing and Fear

Capping your jobs

We now switch back to Sazh and Van, who have found their way into some sort of industrial area. Van is cute and bubbly, as usual, and Sazh is pessimistic, as usual, and all is right in the world. After the CS the Battle Grouping change notice pops up, and we are back in control. Now, before you do anything else, open the journal and then then Crystarium - and you will notice that both Sazh and Van have nearly 3500 CP! Well of course they do, the whole party gains CP from each battle whether they were there for it or not.

You have the CP, it is time to use it! Go on, level up your jobs! When you are done both of them should have all of their jobs capped to the Stage 3 point of Level 1 - but none at Level 2, since we have to progress into the game for that to unlock. Still, capping their jobs is not just a good idea, it is a Great Idea! And now that you have done that, if you have the spare parts you might want to upgrade their weapons when you get to the next save point - but wait until then so you can save BEFORE you do the upgrades in case you make a mistake, right?

Before you continue along the path, turn around and head back - Van will comment about that but keep going and you will find a Treasure Sphere with a Phoenix Down in it - grab that - and now you can follow the path forward!

At the next platform down is your handy-dandy save point - use that now, and then upgrade your kit if you want (and have the stuff to do it).

Fight your way along the path taking out the Bombs as you go, then use the controls on the device you encounter to pull the bridge open and cross, then continue to fight your way along the path, On the right at the bottom is a sphere with an Auric Amulet in it - be sure that you grab that, and then continue on to the nearby save point and use it.

The next sphere has an Ember Ring, and then you have another lengthy fight before hitting the next save point. Take a look around the area after you save and you will notice two alternate paths. The one on the left has a pair of bombs for you to fight and a device that you can turn on via its control panel - so why not do that?

The path on the right has a similar set up, so win the fight and then activate the device. Follow the long path from here and do another fight and device, and then run across for the final fight and device and you activate the thing in the center of the area. Good... I guess? But doing that brings on some more enemy for you to fight - so go fight!

Inside the cave is a sphere with 300 Gil, and when you reach the end you trigger a CS in which you look for a place to spend the night. Van makes her bed for the night and then draws the line - literally - for Sazh, and then we are prompted to save - do that.

04I: Cold Hard Fact

Back in Bodhum

We now cut to Snow, who is prisoner on board a large airship - he seems to have a somewhat friendly relationship with the woman who took him prisoner. The CS cuts to inside where Snow is marched to an audience with the Lord High Mucky-Muck, Sid Raines, Brigadier General of the Fleet.

The confrontation grows hotter as the General makes it clear with his words and attitude just how much he views you - and Serah - as objects. The plan is to execute you all publicly - and he plans on you helping him do it!

We now get a CS of Day 7 at the Seaside City of Bodhum. Serah and Snow are having a chat - and she reveals something that he did not know... Serah is trying to break up with Snow in a nice way, but he pushes the issue until she reveals that she is a L'Cie! Well, that is clearly news to Snow - and as you watch his little brain explodes! Well, not really, but still.

Snow chases after Serah but does not manage to find her - and then we have control of Snow in the flashback! How cool is that? You cannot do anything with his kit or levels, because after all this is a flashback, but you can run along the beach, and you do!

You can talk to your friends, ask them if they have seen Serah, and then, once you have spoken with everyone you are supposed to, you find Serah at the end of the dock. You run up and, in a he-man I-will-not-be-disobeyed voice you tell her where to head in. Clearly she wants to be with you, but she is also afraid of what will happen to her - that she will become a monster. Snow convinces her that he has her back and she agrees that they should team up to find her Focus.

At this point you will be changing discs if you are on the 360 - and then you get a CS with Lightning and Hope in which you are sneaking through an area past the patrols and military. Hope finally steps up to the plate, taking the initiative with Lightning and we are back in control, but this time as Hope!

You should now unlock the Achievement/Trophy 'Instrument of Vengeance' which signals the end of a chapter!

05A: A Strategy for Change

Alpha Behemoth Battle

Just follow the path and kill the stuff that is in your way until you trigger a CS - and you have another heart warming conversation with Hope and then you use the lift to go up a level. Follow the light beacons along the path - though now that I think about it there is no alternate path anyway, so just follow the path :)

Eventually you will fight the large monster who was behind the blocks earlier by working your way around to where it is - after you kill it grab the 3 Antidotes out of the nearby Sphere, and then proceed on the path to trigger a CS in which a PSICOM patrol flies overhead. Lightning tells you that PSICOM has denied that we exist in order to support their public image - no surprise there!

Use the nearby lift to go up a level and then use the save point that is just off the lift on the path to save your game. Fight your way along the path and grab the Hawkeye from the next Treasure Sphere, and then work your way to the next big fight, a pair of puppies and a behemoth!

After you kill the Behemoth you get a CS in which Hope is pretty exhausted and they talk about the other members of our party. Lightning does not have much faith that they will have done very well, and then the conversation turns to Snow - who Hope clearly has not changed his feelings over. Lightning tells him about NORA - No Obligations, Rules, or Authority.

After the CS ends hit the convenient save point nearby and save your game and then take the nearby lift to the next level. We seem to have finally made it down to the ground - yay us! We get another CS in which Lightning gives us the 4-1-1 on this animal preserve slash training center, and then we get a mini-tutorial on Wildlife Auto-containment. Since we plan on killing pretty much everything we come across this is not really an important issue for us, but I can see how it matters if your plan is to run!

As you fight your way along killing off the mobs the barriers come down. Stop and grab the half-dozen antidotes from the Sphere and then continue on to the Great Crawler Massacre - you'll see what I mean :)

Next you enter an area where you are trapped with a Feral Behemoth - good fight - but unfortunately according to Lightning you have tripped the security alarm and can expect an inrush of PSICOM troops! Now you climb the purple-looking tree thingy and you are back on a walkway and headed for the Great Crawler Massacre Part II!

After the fight you hit another CS point and rest. A little more conversation to fill in the story line, and the subject returns to Snow. Lightning pulls the details behind your Snow-hate out of you - and Lightning seems a little surprised. We get a Battle Order change with Lightning back in the command seat, and then we climb down another purple-looking tree thingy to the ground and hit the save point!

05B: No Rules

Lightning's Gift to Hope

It is more of the same as we work our way along the path, fighting mobs and being manly men! Err, wait... A Manly Man and a Girl of Prowess? Whatever! Working your way through the lower area and completing fights to unlock the barriers will net you decent CP and spoils - and a Star Pendant from the first Treasure Sphere! After you grab the Star Pendant you jump back up on to the raised platforms and follow the light trail to a CS.

There is a branch blocking the path and Lightning uses her sword to destroy it - Hope is impressed and asks her if he can use one of those (swords) but she dismisses the possibility, pointing out that it would be "a bit too heavy for you." Hope plays with his knife instead.

The CS cuts to the Day 12 flashback, taking us to Lightning just after Serah tells her that she became a L'Cie and she plans to marry Snow. Not sure what Serah and Snow were expecting, but Lightning's reaction was probably not what they were hoping for. Maybe Snow has a better handle on this than Lightning does - at least in the then-there... Obviously something changes.

After Serah and Snow storm out Lightning opens one of her gifts to discover a knife - the one she ends up giving to Hope. As she is looking at it a news announcement is broadcast featuring none other than Serah - and then we flash forward to Lightning in the here-now who regrets not listening to her sister. Harumph.

Now that the branch is gone and the flashback's are over let's go play with the kitties and crawlers shall we?

This is likely to be the first battle you have where both of your party members are poisoned. You could use Antidotes here - but you do not really need to. A simpler method is to switch your Paradigm deck to Medic and heal you both up. Yes you are still poisoned but once you complete the fight the poison status is removed!

The next fight will introduce a new mob - the Barbed Specter - so you may want to use Libre on it to help identify its stats and weaknesses for your journal. There is an Edged Carbine in the Sphere behind the Specters so remember to get that!

The platform ahead is blocked by a barrier due to the presence of a Feral Behemoth - and you know what that means? That is right - it is time to kick some Behemoth butt!

This should be old hat by now, but the trick to taking out heavy targets is to get them in a staggered state as quickly as you can - which means changing to dual Ravager as that is the fastest way to stagger them. Once staggered you want to switch back to Commando to deal damage wholesale, and that should net you a five-star battle and some decent spoils!

After this fight you jump back down to the lower level - and you will note a convenient save point here as well - so go ahead and use that now!

05C: Of Revenge and Regret

Feral Behemoth Battle

Note Hope's comment "Who'd have thought there would be traps here?"

Take out the group of crawlers for an easy 5-star battle and then the Specter and crawlers nearby, followed by a group of Specters - you may find that Dualcaster works best for this one.

There are two paths that you can take here but as you plan to wipe out all of the mobs which way you go first does not really matter. I chose to take out the Feral Behemoth and kitties first, and then loop back around and fight the Feral Behemoth and Crawlers since this is a more challenging battle. After you win be sure to grab the 8 vials of Fragrant Oil from the Sphere before you loop back around on to the main path!

After you defeat them empty the Treasure Sphere of its contents: a Watchman's Amulet! As you push further back into the area you will encounter two groups on either side of a barrier - you can access either side, on the left is a Specter and on the right is a Feral Behemoth- so take them out! After you take out the Behemoth grab the 1500 Gil from the Treasure Sphere there. Now double back to the area where the path continues.

Before you jump up the purple tree to the upper area and continue on along the path run past it to the left and up the ramp to trigger the next trap. This one holds a Feral Behemoth and a Specter - Fun! Your best strategy here to five-star is to concentrate on taking out the Specter quickly, then switch to Dualcaster and stagger the Behemoth, after which point you will quickly shred it.

Now head up the tree and follow the platform to the lift - use the controls to go up to the Bioweapons Maintenance Platform and hit the save point that is just off of the lift.

There are four puppies for you to slay along the path and then you encounter a team of dead or wounded Sanctum Corps units - not sure which - and we get a CS in which Lightning gives Hope a lesson in how not to care about the fate of others. Good strategy, err... Well... Operation NORA!

Lightning finally says to Hope what we have all been thinking the whole time - Snow did not kill Hope's mother, the Sanctum did, so he should be putting his hate where it belongs! As this CS wraps up we hear Vanille do her narrative thing, and admit that she has a few of her own secrets that would best be forgotten. Now I wonder what those might be?

05D: Operation Nora

Astor Protoflorian Battle

At the next juncture of the platform we encounter a unit of Sanctum Corps soldiers who are very much not dead, and we make them dead! Good on us! A Milvue Velocycle is awaiting us at the next juncture and if you have not fully ID'd that by now go ahead and hit it with Libra to start this fight.

As you wrap up the fight with the Cycle a new squad of Sanctum troops drops in, and it appears that they recognize that Hope is the weak link here and concentrate their fire upon him. You will need to keep a close eye on his health bar, as he can easily get incap'ed if you do not.

Around the next bend is a Treasure Sphere with an Ethersol in it, and just beyond that is the next save point - so you should use that. Ahead of you there is a Cycle and some Marksmen for you to fight on what turns out to be a giant lift! After you kill them use the controls to raise the platform and you will have an encounter with an Astor Protoflorian!

First this is a nasty fight - probably one of the most complicated ones you have faced so far. This thing has a vicious special attack that does significant damage to both of you at the same time, which means you had better be used to switching to and using healing mode! The key to killing this thing is to concentrate on keeping your team healed, and its stagger bar filled. Switch between Yin & Yang and Dualcaster until it is staggered, and then slice it up! You may have to do that several times to kill it, but you can kill it!

The successful end of this battle has many rewards, from spoils and CP to the expansion of the Crystarium! After the battle you get a CS in which Hope declares "Operation Nora Stage One Complete!"

When you engage the Crystarium you are notified that your characters can now advance their jobs - excellent! Check the status bar and you will see that we are now in Stage 4, and we have a pretty good sized chunk of CP stored up, so let us use that, shall we? You have way more than enough CP to cap off all three jobs for Lightning and Hope - which leaves all of Hope's jobs at Level 2 and capped for Stage 4 and Lightning has Commando and Ravager at Level 2 and Medic at Level 1, all three capped for Stage 4. It may not seem like it but having these all capped gives you a strong edge in many of the fights to come!

05E: Driving Forces

There's no place like it

Run along the platform for quite a ways and exit the area by the sea to trigger a CS in which you look across the water at Hope's home town. Lightning offers to stop in and let him touch base with his father, but Hope seems reluctant to do that.

The game now prompts you to save - go ahead and do that now.

We cut to the Lindblum and a CS with Snow and the mystery woman, who announces that it is time to go hunt some L'Cie. Snow clearly has his doubts, and he asks Serah if he is doing the right thing, which triggers a flashback CS to Bodhum in which Snow and Serah are being chased by the cops - Snow runs to his airship and they escape over the water, but there are a lot of cops and they all seem to want you dead!

With your airship in flames you drop Serah off on the construct, which absorbs her, and then you crash on the beach. Frankly I am amazed that you walked away from that crash unharmed - it should have killed you! Now Serah is in the construct and you are not - a significant regret.

The Mystery Chick pops you on the head to get your attention and then you climb into an airship and the game prompts for a save!

06A: Sun-dappled Flight

A strategic retreat

We now cut to a CS of Van and Sazh, who are in a beautiful woodlands area with lush green vegetation and colorful flowers - a virtual paradise compared to where the rest of the party is! Van plays her role as the ditzy teenage girl to the hilt, claiming that the route she chose had nothing to do with knowing where she was and everything to do with the smell of the flowers. While they are sniffing flowers a squad of airborne troops rips overhead, leaving them speculating about what has happened to the team.

Van suggests that they run away in the opposite direction, and Sazh speculates that heading in that direction will take them to Nautilus. This signals the end of a chapter, and you unlock a new Trophy/Achievement: Instrument of Survival.

This is our first opportunity to apply the large bank of CP we have accumulated to our jobs for Van and Sazh, so we should do that now! When we start they are at Level 1 for their jobs but not capped, and after you apply your CP, Van is now Level 2 Ravager, Saboteur, and Medic all of which are capped at Stage 4, with a large chunk of CP left over! Sazh is Level 1 Commando capped at Stage 4, and Level 2 Ravager and Synergist capped at Stage 4, and has also unlocked an extra Accessory Slot.

Both of them have a healthy chunk of CP left over, which we will add to in the fights ahead, so all things considered the team is in pretty good condition and position, and we have a good handle on the game so far! The early grinding that we did will help stave off repeating that for a while, which is nice.

We are playing as Van now, so go ahead and follow the path, making the first jump and moving to engage a new mob: Flandragora. Ahead on the path is a group of Hedge Frogs, followed by some more Flandragora on the left fork of the split ahead. Just past the Flandragora is a Treasure Sphere with half-a-dozen vials of Mysterious Fluid. This branch is a dead end so head back to the main path and follow it around to a mixed fight with a Flandragora and some Hedge Frog sand then a group of four Hedge Frogs. A solo Flandragora fight caps off this section of the path for an easy 32CP.

The next Treasure Sphere gives up a Beladonna Wand - which is one of Van's weapons - and you can now hit the nearby save point to preserve your progress!

A horde of Gremlins is your next fight - and if you have not fully ID'd them back in Chapter 4 now would be a good time to do that if you can... Several groups of Flandragora wait for you in the next section, along with a Treasure Sphere containing a Procyons, which is one of Sazh's weapons!

Another pack of Gremlins waits ahead, and past them yet another pack on the fork to the left. At the back of the split is a Sphere with a Doctor's Code - which should be a duplicate since we already have one of those!

At some point - and I am really not all that sure when that was - we picked up cards for two new shops, one called Magical Moments, and one called Creature Comforts - and the rest of the shops save for Lenora's Garage have new inventory added to them. You might want to take a look to see what they have now - or not...

06B: A Wish for Daddy

Flandragora Battle

Back on the main path we travel a little ways and get a CS in which we learn a little more about Sazh and his previous life. Van becomes concerned about Sazh's son, vowing that they need to get him home, and points out to him that being a L'Cie does not remove his obligations as a father. This line of questioning triggers another Day 11 flashback in which Sazh sees his son.

Who was that woman at the end of the flashback? How can Van be so damn cheerful?!

A mini-tutorial pops up on avoiding fights - chah! Like we would ever do that?! Hmm, a Scalebeast huh? You know we have to kill it, right? Right! But just in case things do not go well, why not hit that save point right there?

The fight with the Scalebeast is a tough one but only because it is long - the thing has good armor and a high HP count, and it can dish out some significant damage, which means you have to keep an eye on your health bars - but save for those factors it is really a fight of attrition. The first time you pop it into staggered mode is relatively easy compared to the second time, which requires serious damage management and deck control, but taking this thing out with the two party members you have with you is not as big a challenge as the game suggested, so I suggest you do it!

I was only able to two-star this first fight - there are three more of these beasts that you can fight if you follow the main path, or you can take the jump point on the left and avoid the fights if you want. I did not avoid the fights as I hoped to figure out what the right deck combination was - I did not, only managing to increase my score to three-stars. Clearly this is a challenge I will have to return to and figure out!

If you take the left shortcut and then kill the beast there you can get 15 Iron Shells from the Treasure Sphere here. Considering that these beasts are worth a minimum of 180CP each I cannot see any logical reason not to kill them - but you can avoid the fights here if you like. There is another Treasure Sphere past the fourth beast with a Librascope in it, and nearby are four more Gremlin to kill.

Another group of Germlin are guarding the next Treasure Sphere - which has 10 Scaled Wings in it - and then you take on another, larger group, before triggering a CS in which Van has a chat with Sazh.

Sazh crashes and Van spends a while talking to his pet Chocobo - and then Van takes a nap as well. When she wakes to the choco-alarm Sazh is nowhere to be seen - and we get the entry for Nautilus added to our journal.

If you try to continue along the path the chocobo will stop you, so do not go to the right, head left instead - so head for the marker on the radar map and we finally catch up to him. He is standing staring out at the lake thinking. You know, Sazh is do moody it is a wonder he is not wearing all black and moping around all gothy and stuff...

06C: Father and Son

A rest in which much is revealed

We get a CS of a flashback - Sazh took his son to see the fal'Cie and he ends up being made into a L'Cie while Sazh is off purchasing that chocobo pet he has for him! More significantly, did you notice the clothing on the person who was with his son briefly? Hmm, suspiciously familiar! Remember that strange woman? It turns out she is a PSICOM officer named Jihl Nabaat!

As Sazh tells his story we learn that he is much more involved in all of these events than we previously suspected, and so was Dajh! Was that Van who was with his son when he was turned into a L'Cie? I could not say for sure, but it looked like it to me!

Hit the save point ahead and then continue on the path where you find a shining orb that, when Van touches it, causes it to rain. A mini-tutorial explains that this is a Climate Control Orb that is used for controlling the weather - well duh! A large group of Mud and Hedge Frogs spawn as a result of your changing the weather - and you kill them. The Hedge Frogs we have seen before, but the Mud Frogs are new to us - so ID'ing them would be, well, an idea!

There are several of these orbs, and you can use them to control what mobs you encounter here - if you change the weather back to sunny you end up with a different type of mob, change it back to rain and the frogs - and other mobs - re-spawn. Ordinarily that would make this a really good grinding spot - if we needed to grind - but we do not need to right now, which is a bummer.

Ahead of you - if it is raining - is a group of Gremlin with a Scalebeast - kill them if you want to... If it is sunny you should see Wyverns and Flandragora. Once you have ID'd the Mud Frogs you may want to switch back to daylight to try for the Wyverns...

There is a Treasure Sphere with a Metal Armband along the right fork of the path, and straight ahead is your first Wyvern so it would be an idea to cast Libra on it now - which will give you the full ID for that beast. Follow the path through the cave and you will find lots of targets on the other side!

On the right is another Wyvern if you are inclined to such a battle, and on the left some Flandragora. Which you fight is up to you - I took them all out :) Near the Flandragora is a Sphere with an Aqua Ring, and just past that are some Garchimacara to fight. That is another new beast to us so you will want to Libra them as well. I swear to God I heard Van scream "Pika!" during this fight and I had Pokemon Flashback bad.

Ahead of you on the path is another Wyvern and some more Garchimacara for you to kill - man is this fun or what?! After you defeat them there is a group of Flandragora to fight, and past those some Garchimacara, making this one of the toughest stretches of path battle-wise we have yet to encounter!

After that last battle there is a save point on the ledge above - and if you feel the way I do it couldn't be more timely. I would hate to end up losing that string of fights! As you pass the save point you trigger a CS in which you slowly approach a pair of large animals - and Sazh suggests that you sneak past them - for an Epic Fail! This is Enki and Enlil - and no, we have never encountered them before because basically they are the two boss mobs for us to fight at the end of this chapter!

No need to panic here - this all comes down to managing your health while putting them into Stagger so you can dish out the hurt. Unfortunately they both have special attacks that are devastating - but fortunately they have to charge them up to use them. The crux is that monitoring health is critical here, because if you are even a little bit low and they use their special... Well... You may get sick of starting this fight over again and again if you are not good at tracking health and changing your deck quickly to heal!

Strategy-wise you want to get one of the dead as fast as you can, because playing with both at the same time - and

both their special attacks - makes this a brutal fight. Even after you have taken one out though, you have to contend with the fact that whenever the remaining one uses its special attack that resets its stagger meter! It felt like once the mob was alone it was able to charge and use its special attack a lot faster, so taking out the remaining one seemed like twice as hard as taking out the first one, and who knows, maybe it was?

This is one fight you will be happy to see over, I can tell you that! Even the 1,000 CP pay-off at the end feels like it was not enough, considering the effort we had to put in here... But the spoils were pretty cool - a Riptide Ring and a Fulmen Ring plus our Crystarium expanded

The post-fight CS shows them walking towards the path and Sazh remarks that it is only a hop-skip-and-a-jump to Nautilus! If all went according to plan you should have fully ID'd both Enki and Enlil, which is a good thing. Hate to have to re-load and do that fight over if you did not ID them.

When you apply your CP you should take Van to the cap for Stage 5 of Ravager, and Saboteur, and gotten a bite into the first upgrade in Medic before running out of CP. You will also have unlocked an additional Accessory Slot for Van. For Sazh you should have capped Stage 5 for Level 1 Commando and Level 2 Ravager and gotten a piece of the first crystal for Level 2 Synergist. Sadly you know what this means, right? Yeah, it is time to do some more grinding :(

Before we do that, backtrack to the previous save point and use it, and then go ahead and take care of updating your kit, doing any upgrades that you need, and adding the items for their additional Accessory Slots now. After you do all of that to your satisfaction, save again, so that you are all set to grind! If you remember the area we just passed through prior to that monumental fight was rich in grinding mobs, so this is actually a good thing, right? Remember, all we want to do is get enough to cap-off the current jobs so that when we move forward from here we have the benefit of all of those skills and stats...

Ah, done grinding now? Yeah, me too. I don't know how long it took you, but I was surprised to be able to get the CP that I needed in less than twenty minutes, which really doesn't qualify as a grind...

More is revealed

Follow the path now up the ramp and through the tunnel and you will see the fence that blocks off entrance to the docks. Luckily there is a hole in the fence that we can climb through - at which point we get a CS of them going through the fence and walking to the docks - and getting caught in a sudden rainstorm. Very cool graphics in this game!

Van is on the urge of revealing a secret that she has been holding in all along - a secret that is tearing her apart inside - and Sazh did not help by giving a flip answer, but maybe he is not as perceptive as he thinks he is... Van somehow keeps from blurting out her secret - but by now I think we all know that she is clearly an illegal alien from Pulse, right?

This signals the end of a chapter - and unlocks the Achievement/Trophy Instrument of Rebellion. That is our 7th story-related 'chieve eh? It looks like the vast majority of them are story related so you will not be missing many in this game by the end!

07A: The Capital of Commerce

Entering the city

The opening CS shows the PSICOM forces preparing to deploy - and deploying - and then our POV switches to Hope and Lightning, who have managed to get right up to the edge of the city but now need to find a way in that does not involve confrontation with an army. Fortunately Hope is familiar with the area, having grown up and played in this section of the city. He points out a secret route to the train station - using the drainage pipe and underground passages.

We start with a save point smack dab in front of us - may as well use that so if we have to reload for any reason we do not have to sit through that long CS again.

First thing first - we have a large pool of CP and our jobs are no longer capped off! Let's get that little matter taken care of now, while we are thinking about it! Once you are done Lightning should be fully capped off for Stage 5 Level 2 on Commando, and almost completely capped on Ravager, but probably Medic's gap is untouched, and Hope will have both Ravager and Synergist fully capped at Stage 5 Level 2 but Medic partially un-capped, which means we have some grinding to do if we want them totally capped going into the chapter.

Yeah, bummer, but grinding it also means that Lightning will get a full level gain on Medic, which is good since that is one of her secondary roles in full-party battle. There are two groups of soldiers in the area that we can use if we want to grind it - and I did, but YMMV. It did not take long since the area is small and the CP is not really bad for the time it takes, so once you are done we should move on along the path!

Before you go into the tunnel with Hope you see that hook-shaped area on the map in the corner? Right, there is a Treasure Sphere there that has 3 lengths of Fiber Optic Cable that is worth having - so let's grab that real quick right?

As you drop down into the drainage pipe and follow the path there is a side-pipe on the left with a Treasure Sphere that has 3 flasks of Holy Water, and then a jump point further on where you leave the pipe and encounter a Corps Pacifex - this is your first encounter with one of these and chances are you will not completely fill the data on it from one encounter... That is okay though because directly ahead there are two more of them and a Tranquifex, so you should try to Libra both types.

On average it takes two or more encounters with a given mob to fully ID it - check your journal now to see if you did manage it - remember there is an Achievement/Trophy for fully ID'ing 100 enemy units, and in theory if you manage to ID every type in each level you should unlock this around mid-way through Chapter 10.

After the fight run up the slope to the stairs and either avoid or fight the Falco Velocycle - if you choose to fight it then be aware that it has one nasty special attack that can (and often will) incapacitate Hope. You may have to use a few Phoenix Downs on this fight if you do not keep an eye on his health bar, I am just saying. It would be an idea to Librascope this thing too, as you want to get it ID'd since it is new to us.

Enter the broken pipe and exit into the large tunnel and then you jump down onto a track and get a CS in which Hope tries to reassure you - but pessimist you - that doesn't work. Activate the controls at the end of the platform to call the lift and ride it across to the other side, following the path until you encounter a pair of Flamitor - another new mob for us, so try to ID them.

The next beasties we encounter are around the bend - a Lucidon - and it is nasty! It's special attack can practically kill you on its own, so minding your health bar and smooth deck switching is a given. Try to stagger this thing as quickly as you can but do not take chances on your own death - as that will end the fight in a manner we do not want. Hope getting incapped is something that we can deal with by using a Phoenix Down - bear that in mind, but try not to let him get incapped, right?

The problem with this thing is that whenever it uses its special attack that resets its stagger meter, so you have to

press the attack in Dualcaster to push the meter when you can, even if that means risking an incap on Hope to do it. Once you actually do fill the meter though, this mob goes down fast. All that work for a lousy 96 CP may seem like a rip-off, but hey, at least it is dead, right?

Ahead of you is a fal'Cie and you have a brief CS about it before you continue on - this one is a fal'Cie named Carbuncle though it is nowhere near as cute as the Carbuncle in FFXI :)

At the top of the nearby stairs is another pair of Flanitor, so if you did not fully ID them before make the effort here, and then kill them! At the lift dock activate the controls to call the lift and ride it up to the next dock, where sadly you must fight another Lucidon. Sigh. Remember, you want to stagger it as fast as you can and then kill it quickly! If you try to stay on top of heals at the expense of Dualcasting this fight will just drag on and on, so be aggressive with this thing and it should take no more than 30 seconds to die.

07B: No Way to Live

Humanities place in the Universe

At the next platform you get another CS with the fal'Cie that fills in some of the information on what they actually do and where humanity fits into the big picture. Yes, we are pets. How cool is that?! Yeah I did not see this coming either, but epiphany can be like that. Hope has a confused take on the whole issue, but that makes sense, he is a kid. Lightning on the other hand really has no excuse.

Fight the trio of Flanitor and then grab the Warding Talisman from the Treasure Sphere before you continue along the path and then run along the next platform for yet another CS in which the previous conversation continues. Lightning explains her position - or lack of one - and then Lightning does what most adults do, compares herself to the youngster, as if that sort of logic ever worked before! Add into the mix another memory of Serah and Snow, and then Hope has a mini-freakout...

Use the controls to call the lift and ride it over to the next dock, and hit the save point there hard.

Just past the save point is another CS in which Lightning tries to bring Hope around to her way of thinking - starting by encouraging him to see his father... She keeps underscoring the whole Hope and hope thing, and then you jump on the lift and head on up. Perhaps Hope is coming around to the idea that Snow is not really a monster - who can say?

At the top of the shaft as you step off of the lift you hear and see a news broadcast and are suddenly confronted by an army of soldiers, mech's, and that dork Colonel. Lightning tells Hope to start running and then Snow turns up - and unleashes his Eidolon on the troops!

As they ride along the crystal highway that Snow generated they end up taking out the majority of the troops, and then reunite at the bottom. Lightning throws Hope into Snow's arm and Snow tries to convince Lightning to come with him - but that does not work, and then more troops show up. Snow puts Hope on the back of his bike and they have them an escape, and you get your first opportunity to play with an Eidolon in Gestalt mode.

I ended up doing crystal donuts, which is a good way to take out a lot of troops when you are surrounded, but sadly once you take control of the bike the meter is running, and you do not have all that large a Gestalt capacity at the moment.

07C: The Weight of Vengeance

Orion Battle

You are fighting an Orion, and its attack is crippling. If you try to take it on tow-to-toe (I did) you will quickly find that it does WAY more damage than your wimpy potions can restore - and you are down to just potions as you are fighting alone and so have no medic to help you. After burning through 40 potions I finally understood that this tactic was not going to work, and I summoned Shiva, who pretty much twisted Orion's scrawny neck off in like 5 seconds, ending the match with a 5-star rating!

Orion paid off 307 CP and a credit chip in spoils - and speaking of CP, we have not updated Snow's jobs in like for ever... But before we get to that we need to view the CS as Snow explains the situation that they are in - and about their new ally. Hope finds it very hard to believe that the army is anything but a threat, but Snow seems convinced.

This triggers a mini-tutorial on the Sentinel job - you should probably read this if you are not already sure that you have that data cold. We have already been using that job so we have a working idea on how things like Stealguard works, but Provoke is new to us as is Vendetta. According to the tut we should switch to Commando when we are down to just a few enemies because Sentinel is not effective unless we are fighting a large number.

After the CS ends take a look at Snow's Crystarium - he has a boatload of CP of course, because we never updated his jobs, so before we hit the nearby save point how about we go ahead and do that?

After you update you will have taken Snow's Commando job to the Level 2 Stage 5 cap, Ravager to the Level 2 Stage 5 cap, and Sentinel to the same. In addition though you will have unlocked an additional Accessory Slot when you cap Sentinel - which is a good thing - so go ahead and load the Equip menu and see what we can put in the slot!

Now that you have seen to Snow's Levels and Kit, it is time to re-supply and sell off any resources that are marked to sell at a Premium (anything marked like that - credit chips are a good example - are items that you should be selling and not using for upgrades anyway). As I burned through the bulk of my potions before realizing I needed to summon my Eidolon to win the fight with Orion, I need to replace my potions, and while I was doing that I made sure that I had a few Antidotes and a few Holy Waters just in case I end up in a fight without a medic again.

Alright now, hit the save point and then head up the stairs for our next fight, which includes a PSICOM Bombardier - which is new to us! After you ID him, head into the ice cave and up the sluce for a brief CS and then your next fight with a PSICOM Scavenger and a pair of Pacifex. You should already have the Pacifex ID'd but not the Scavenger as he is new to us. As that battle ends a group of Pacifex with a PSICOM Predator will show up - the Predator is another new mob to us, so try to ID him as well.

The path we are on dead-ends in a fight with a two PSICOM Pacifex and a PSICOM Warlord - we need to ID the Warlord as it is new to us, so go ahead and take them out, then empty the Treasure Sphere of its Fortissoll vial, and then backtrack to the jump point and cross over. Halfway along the crystal ramp is another battle with a pair of Tranq's and a Scavenger.

Towards the back of this area (not up the ramps) there is a battle with another Warlord, a pair of Tranq's and a Predator that turns out to be quite a fight, but once you get the Warlord staggered he goes down pretty quick. If you head up the ramp now you will fight a group of Tranq's and then empty a Treasure Sphere for its cache of a Paladin - which is one of Snow's weapons. Excellent, we can tick another one of those off of the list!

Now return to the path and follow it through the hole in the wall, head left and grab the Insulated Cabling from the Sphere there and then turn around and follow the path to the save point and use that.

Use the nearby jump point to drop down and follow the path to the next CS - Snow has a chat with Hope as they observe some enemy troops, then the conversation turns to what little wisdom Snow has to offer. It looks like Hope still wants to put a knife in Snow's gut - cannot blame him. Snow gets a call from his boss - and Lightning - and then

we get a CS of the troops, as the Colonel tells them there are no rules of engagement anymore. Nasty.

07D: It's Called Interference

Snow and Hope Together Again

Back to Lightning - they plan to meet up at Hope's place - and just when Lightning is about to warn Snow about Hope the signal goes all wonky.

- Meet Fang -

I assume that by now you figured out that the woman who captured Snow is Fang - the final member of our team - well it is. As this is our first time in control of her there are some chores we need to complete right away!

First drop open the Equip menu and add her extra Accessory - as there is none selected for her when we get her. Next open her Crystarium - She is mostly Leveled - well, she has Level 2 jobs for Commando (her main), Sentinel, and Saboteur (her secondary jobs), but they are not capped. Sadly she does not have a huge amount of CP banked - but she does have some and I suggest you apply it to Commando as that is her main role. What she has available does not get her to the Stage 5 cap in Commando but it is a start - there is no point in trying to grind just for her, but she will catch up in CP eventually as we work the others, so no worries there!

Once you have finished the chores hit the save point that is three steps ahead and on the right, and then follow the path to the left and take out the group of Pacifex and Tranq's. After you take them out you have to fight an Orion - but you already know how to do that - so it should be a quick fight. After the Orion there is a group of Pacifex with a Predator that should be no worries for you.

After that string of fights I will forgive you if you decide to backtrack a few steps and hit the save point - I did that myself - before you continue along the path to trigger the next CS.

07E: The Pulse L'Cie

Meet Fang

Lightning takes this opportunity to ask Fang who she is - a good question. Fang tells a little of her story - including the fact that she is from Pulse. She says that she was once turned to crystal herself - but that her partner and her changed back to human when the trouble started. Her partner... Vanille.

The focus now shifts to Hope and Snow, who are hiding near a large group of soldiers who are taking citizens prisoner. Hope wants to help them, Snow does too but battles with his duty to protect Hope...

There is a very convenient save point like right here - please use it! Now it is time to kick some soldier butt! Just work your way along the boardwalk taking out the troops as you encounter them. At the first turn there is a Guardian Amulet in a Sphere beside a save point - so empty the sphere and hit the save point and then continue along the path for a few more fights then another CS.

In the CS we see the prisoners all gathered in a square with some troops - and Snow has a bad feeling about it. To clear the square of innocents Snow shoots into the air and then yells that he is a Pulse L'Cie, which of course freaks out the crowd, who runs. Then the military opens fire on the fleeing civilians - and we are back in control again, only this time we are fighting PSICOM Ariel Snipers - a new mob for us! Be an idea to hit them with Libra, right?

The suck thing about this particular enemy is that their attacks actually interfere with our own, and even if we have already started the active phase of our attack if theirs engages we get pushed back and our attack gets delayed, which can - and does - create synch issues when you are building the stagger meter. Still, pick one and kill it, and move on, and it gets easier :) As there were three of them that should have been enough exposure for you to fully ID them - check your journal to be sure.

By my count we should be between 65 and 68 ID'd depending on if you missed a few that were easy to miss early on in the 4th and 5th Chapter - if not you should be at 68 now which means you will be right on course to unlock this Trophy/Achievement when we hit Chapter 10.

07F: Mob Injustice

Crowd Control

Another group of Snipers is waiting ahead - after you take them out turn the corner for the next CS in which you encounter a little girl who is completely freaked out, and some citizens decide to kill you. Good job on turning the locals against us, Snow!

Snow's answer to this threat is to bring the roof down to demonstrate his powers without killing anyone - and it works. At least until the army finally shows up - and then Snow uses a Sniper's boost pack to help him and Hope escape! This triggers another short CS that shows the end of the escape and puts you back in control on top of the Towers.

Run along the path here to the save point and use it, then continue on for another short CS in which Hope collapses and Snow, clueless as to the undercurrent of emotion in Hope runs his mouth. We learn a little more about Snow's back-story. While this conversation is wrapping up a new ariel threat appears, and we are back on the path!

Take out the group of Snipers and then use the jump points. Before you try to follow the path head left to the dead end (in the wrong direction) and snag the Shaman's Mark from the Treasure Sphere. About then you should get attacked by a Falco Velocycle - we have fought these before - which you should take out in the usual way.

Next up as you follow the path is a pair of Snipers, and then another Falco Velocycle at the end of the hall. One thing about this Velocycle - if you are unlucky and YOU are the target of its special attack and not Hope, you are going to die - unless you have shell and protect cast on you by Hope! Otherwise you do not have the health to withstand it - so if you plan on not dying either use the shroud or have Hope cast the spells.

There are two bridges you can cross - the farthest one has a Sphere with 3 Thrust Bearings in it so grab that, and then run out on to the bridge at the end on the right as you move forward and grab the Vidofnir from the Sphere - that is one of Hope's weapons by the way!

There is a cycle overhead so use a shroud before you fight it to make things easier on yourself - and then grab the Deceptisol from the Sphere ahead. Once you use the jump point you get jumped - by a Cycle and a Sniper. Sheesh! After the fight follow the track around to the Sphere with 2,000 Gil in it and then hit the main path for another group of Snipers!

Use the jump point ahead and yet another Cycle/Sniper confrontation - man they are just piling the grief on us here!! don't know about you, but I always make the Cycle my priority target in these situations so that it gets dead before it can use its special! Follow the roof around here and go inside to hit the save point.

From here it is a short few steps to trigger the next CS - in which you and Hope exit the building on to a large open roof - and Hope stops you to ask you a question. Once again Hope gets close to asking the real question that is on his mind, and once again... Epic Fail. Only this time the boss mob that just popped up on to the roof is partially to blame!

This is an Ushumgal Subjugator... This is a nasty mob.

I don't know about you but this was a tough fight for me. A lot of deck shifting and healing on the fly... After the battle Snow has Hope sit down to rest and tries to buy him a soda - but Hope is not having any. Then Hope starts to have Mommy Visions - weird. Once again Hope starts along the road to asking the question - but this time he actually asks it in a round-about way, and slams head-first into Snow's secret weakness! As much as Hope hates Snow for being the cause to his mother's death, it turns out that Snow blames himself even more.

Just as Hope is about to kill Snow they get attacked by an airship, and they both end up falling. Bummer. We are prompted to save - and we do - and then the story shifts away from Hope and Snow.

07G: Over the Edge

Fang and Van deep background

Fang and Vanille are in a flashback to Day 5, in a power plant. We see the story of how Fang and Van get separated, and learn a little about what they are doing there. Fang takes over as the narrator for a bit - and then we fade in to Fang and Lightning!

Before you head along the path reverse direction and grab the 15 Bestial Claws from the Sphere behind you, and then follow the path! Fang has some banked CP thanks to our fighting with Hope and Snow so apply that to her jobs now before we get too far into this and have to fight. Follow the jump points up to the save point and use it - and then fight your way along the path to the stairs and an Orion you get to kill.

Taking out the Orion is a lot easier if you cast slow on it first - and then kick its butt! Once it is down and you have collected your spoils, proceed on the path along the left side so you go along the upper balcony instead of the lower path (this is a brief split here). This lets you approach the next Orion from behind, which means you get the drop on it and get a few free-shots at the enemy. Love that!

Once you take out the Orion and the Scavenger grab the Gae Bolg from the Treasure Sphere that is situated where the Orion was standing - the Gae Bolg is one of Fang's weapons. Now continue along the path and up the stairs where you will encounter a Lodestar Behemoth! This is another mob that we have never encountered before, so be sure to Libra it as it would be good to ID this thing quickly both to improve our combat and add it to our collection!

Hit him with slaw at a minimum and it should be a very brief fight. Once you have the Behemoth down continue along the path and trigger the next CS. Fang tries to get Snow but the comm system is still disrupted - Lightning speculates about the safety of the other team members, and Fang offers her an opinion that is something less than nice about the people of Cocoon. As you exchange information it turns out that the propaganda used on both sides was pretty similar.

After the CS ends you have a fight with some Corps soldiers and then a pair of Orion - which should not be too big a challenge now that you know the secret to taking them out quickly. At the top of the ramp after the fight is a Treasure Sphere with an Axis Blade in it - that is one of Lightning's weapons and another we can cross off of the list!

Follow the path around to trigger the next CS in which Fang talks about the L'Cie brands - and how you can tell how much time you have left to complete your Focus by the design of the brand. Good information to have I would guess. Fang is worried about Van's brand, worried that the time is growing really short for her friend. Lightning bemoans her lack of any real path and goals, pointing out that there is nothing for her to fight for...

Just as the conversation is wrapping up a military patrol rips overhead and Fang worries that it means that they have found Snow.

07H: Until She Wakes

Additional background

We cut back to Snow and Hope - who if you recall when we last saw them were busy falling to their death. Well, maybe not death - but Snow is not looking too good and Hope is out cold! Snow hoists Hope on to his shoulders, grabs the knife and tries to keep moving - the goal being to hook back up with Lightning and Fang at Hope's father's house.

As Snow anders off in the general direction of the path we relocate back to Fang and get a Battle Order adjustment - we are back in control of Fang. An announcement is broadcast over the public address system telling us that we are in a zone that has now been cut off from the rest of the city and any attempt to leave will be met by blah blah blah. Right.

Use the nearby save point and then turn around and go up the first set of stairs (farther away from the save point) and move forward to engage the enemy soldiers here. After you defeat them empty the Treasure Sphere that is here of the Tungsten Bangle - a dupe since we already have one of those - and then follow the green line around to take out the two PSICOM and the Orion you find there.

At this point if you have not already done so, you may want to apply any available CP to Fang's jobs, and see to their kit, upgrading weapons and accessories and checking to be sure that the best stuff you have is equipped. An easy way to make sure that you have the maximum bonus multiplier for each item is to buy a stack of Sturdy Bones from the Creature Comforts store and apply them first to get the 3X multiplier prior to using any of your other resources.

This will maximize the benefits that you get for the other stuff - always a good idea - and it is a cheap way to manage getting the top multiplier on your kit! If you do all that be sure that you save while you are there to lock in all that progress!

Now fight your way along the path taking out the units that you encounter until you reach the stairs at the far left corner where there is a Treasure Sphere containing a Black Belt - another duplicate item I am sad to say, but hold on to those duplicates because they will be useful later!

Hit the save point ahead and then take out the Bombardier and the Lodestar Behemoth ahead - if you have not fully ID'd either of these be sure that you Libra them now right? You should be adept at taking out these guys now so this will be a short fight, and an easy 5-star one at that!

At the top of the far stairs you trigger another CS that takes us back to Snow and his struggle to escape the area. He makes it onto a nearby roof with Hope on his shoulder and collapses there before continuing on - Hope wakes up and the back and forth between them continues. Snow admits that he blames himself and tries to explain - not very well - but at least some closure is achieved.

07I: Sustained by Hate

Ushumgal Boss Battle

Snow returns Hope the knife and renews his vow to make things better, and then stumbles off into the sunset. Hope grows up a little here - which is good - but clearly not enough. Just when you think everything is going good, a huge clawer monster flies in to ruin the day!

- Ushumgal Boss Fight -

Right, this is the second Ushumgal we have faced in this chapter - but this time we have to face it alone, as Hope. That is not as bad a thing as it might be though, because Hope has some good jobs. Start this fight by switching to Synergist and casting Shell on yourself as a minimum. Now switch between Ravager and Medic as needed and tear that puppy apart! Well, not really...

Once you do a certain amount of damage - a single Quake should do it - Fang and Lightning appear and join your party! Excellent because let us be honest here, you were not going to kill that thing all alone no matter how ballsy you think you are! Bear in mind that this second mob is not going to be as easy to take down as the first one was because it is not the same mob - this one has about twice the HP that the other one did and it even counts as a separate ID in our list if that helps you to grasp that it is a different type of the same mob?

Watch out for its special attack - if your main character is even a little damaged when it uses it, it is Game Over. So Sorry. Okay now I know you are probably getting frustrated here - but this is a boss mob fight! Consider though that this is the first blatant grief code that we have encountered in the entire game so far! That is not too bad when you consider that a lot of games these days practically rely upon it.

If you are having trouble taking this guy down try the following - I know this worked really really well for me and it will for you too!

- Start by casting Libra on the mob
- Switch to Evened Odds and wait until slow has been cast on the mob and Shell and Protect on your party.
- Switch to Relentless Assault and start pounding the mob.
- When you see one or more of your party losing a little health use a potion in between attacks - this will work well to keep you capped up in health from the minor and medium attacks and it allows you to continue to work towards staggering the thing without having to shift to medic. Do not underestimate the value of those potions, using this tactic gives you fluid progress and it works!
- Switch to Solidarity if one of your party goes into the yellow and let them get healed up, then switch back to Relentless Assault. If Slow drops off of the mob quickly switch to Evened Odds and wait for it to be recast. Same if you lose Shell or Protect.
- The first time that stagger is triggered concentrate on staying in Relentless Assault and use potions to heal, even if you have to do it after every attack! You want to do as much damage as you can as quickly as you can and not waste any of the staggered time!
- Rinse and repeat the above to get the second staggered meter filled, then kill the thing and be done with it!

Seriously if you follow the advice I give above you will not die, you will kill it, and you will 5-Star this fight. You will get a score of 13,800, the battle should take no more than 3 minutes and 59 seconds - well under the 6 minute 31 second target time, and it should pay off at least 960 CP! I received a Shield Talisman and 8 Abominable Wing as spoils for this fight - YMMV.

At the end of the fight you get a CS of Hope handing the knife back to Lightning and a heart warming exchange between them. Van pipes in as narrator, and our heroes stumble off into the sunset.

07J: Healing the Rifts

Hope reunites with his father

You regain control of Fang outside of Hope's house. Head forward and left to get a Phoenix Down from the Treasure Sphere here, then join Hope at the door to his house to trigger the CS of Hope reunited with his father. Hope tells his dad that mom is dead, and then we cut away to the inside and a bit later. Dad is understandably broken up over the loss of his wife - Hope has had longer to come to terms with this obviously - and maybe cannot handle his father falling apart.

Hope tries to tell his father what the plan is - and Dad reacts in a way that is much better than you might have anticipated. Perhaps he is not a member of the brainwashed generation after all? Fang looks all warm and fuzzy and then we are back in control of her and look! A save point! Right in the middle of Hope's dining room! Man, what an odd place for a save point?!

Now is a good time to see to Fang's jobs and kit - you should now have capped Commando and Sentinel should be one crystal away from being capped. Saboteur will need about 3 full points and the Accessory point so four in total - an easy grind!

You can spend a few minutes exploring the apartment - there are examine spots in it - so why not? You might want to check the TV - you can catch the news broadcast that is mostly about you. The CS cuts away to Lightning who is also watching TV in the bedroom with Snow, who then wakes up.

Lightning and Snow have a deep conversation and make up, and it is really about time that they made nice, right? Hope makes an appearance to pass on a message - his Dad wants to talk to them.

The scene in the living room is understandably rather tense, and while Snow tries to take the blame yet again for Nora's death, Hope points out that Snow rescued him, which implies that he feels that the one sort of balances the other one. Dad pretty baldly sums up the situation, including the threat that L'Cie represent to innocents - which is considerable and sort of makes you wonder how any of them could see a graceful way out of this situation. I sure don't!

Snow declares that they will take down the Sanctum, to which Hope's father offers a rebuttal - that tearing down the forces of control will ultimately lead to even more death and destruction. What he means by that is simple enough though largely unstated - often you are better with the evil that you know rather than a new one you do not.

The conversation that was happening in that room likely would have been both interesting and very informative, as they were about to touch upon the political and cultural aspects of the occupying force and the threats that it represented - so is it really a surprise that just when they are all ready to work together and get down to the nitty-gritty the man shows up? Nah!

- Time to fight again -

A gas attack begins an otherwise bog-standard raid by a mixed group of soldiers. You should be able to quickly take control of the situation and eliminate the immediate threat, but Fang is right; barricading yourself in the apartment is just an invitation to a siege and you cannot win that sort of fight.

There are additional troops in the house - go ahead and take them out now. If you decide that you want to cap off Gang's jobs this is actually not a bad place to do that grind considering that you do not need a lot of CP and there are two groups of mobs worth a total of just over 300CP that you can burn through in less than 2 minutes? That is a quick grind spot if I ever saw one! You will easily 5-star both fights and the spoils can include some useful items including premium Gil-value items, so what do you say? Want to get those pesky Stage 5 job levels capped now? I know I do!

Right, so it took five fights and less than 15 minutes to cap off Fang's jobs and pick up an extra Accessory Slot - not a bad piece of work! Remember this was mostly about getting Fang up to speed here - she will be playing an increasingly important role as a DD member of our party, and with her Sentinel Skill she also has the ability to Tank when needed.. Grinding her to cap was mostly painless and the bonus is that all of our other party members banked that CP to use when we get our next unlock! Bonus on top of bonus! Excellent! Another consideration here is that much of the spoils you just picked up have indirect and direct value for upgrading weapons - something we are actually going to need to do in a little bit.

Before you move on along the path check the corner of the room for a Treasure Sphere and grab the vial of Ethersol out of it. While we are on the subject, you may want to be really careful about using Ethersol - it has the effect of fully charging your ATB meter which is clearly a valuable resource to have, so you will not want to use it indiscriminately. In fact you will likely want to hold on to all that you get, because these things - like Deceptisol - will be invaluable when you start doing the long series of Stone Missions later, so it does not hurt to plan ahead now, right?

In the way back area of the flat that is shaped like a hook you will find a Sphere with a Brawler's Wristband - this is a new accessory for us and one that Fang can make good use of, and it is also one of the items you will want to be collecting for the Weapon and Accessory collection Trophy/Achievement. Do not sell these no matter how broke you are - you want to not sell ANY accessories or weapons until you absolutely know you will not need them later!

Now examine the red examine point and you get a CS with some thumps, and a chat between Snow and Hope's Dad - and then a new threat arrives. An airship and some elite troops. Fang wonders out loud "Who ordered the Battalion?"

Snow holds his coat out in the window to test their attention and it gets shot up - which means they are in fact paying attention! Next he does something really dumb - he actually exposes himself, walking out to confront the enemy! All things being equal, the same thing that happened to the coat should have happened to him - but as the script did not call for "Snow does scarecrow dance as large chunks of flesh and bodily fluids are forcefully removed from his body" that does not happen...

In a flowing string of words that - if I can be frank - seems completely out of character for him, Snow makes a convincing plea, and then the PSICOM Colonel steps in. While he appreciates your position, he is one of the long line of military who follows the party line - regardless of how faulty that logic is - and he explains that to you. You know, under different circumstance you could have been mates with this guy - you never know!

07K: Here Comes the Cavalry

Havok Skytank Boss Battle

Just when you think you have the dance card memorized a new element arrives - and the Colonels own men frag him! Lightning takes charge and sets the stage for their exit - hoping to protect Hope's father, but really considering the way that the government treats people who merely smell the far of a L'Cie it does not seem like the gesture will amount to much, right?

It seems that the attack originated from the airship? If you have not figured it out yet, that airship is a Havok Skytank, and it is the final boss battle for this chapter - and the elements that make up its construction are the remaining ID's we need to make as well. Those include the Starboard Hull, Portside Hull, Starboard Turret, and Portside Turret.

Now from a strategic point of view we should probably be targeting the turrets first, right? So first thing we do is Libra one of the turrets, then cast Shell and Protect on us, and maybe Slow on the airship though I am not sure that the spell will have any effect on a mechanical thingy...

Failing this fight sort of sucks because it basically has a poorly-chosen retry position - you end up having to go through the entirety of the previous CS - so try not to fail it?

Taking out the Skytank does not have to be overly complicated. Use the following tactics:

- Have Hope buff you up with Shell and Protect in Even Odds
- Use Librascope on the target (or Libra) to ID its components
- Switch to Delta and take out the turrets and then the hulls.
- When you are injured switch to Solidarity to heal - but try to use potions to heal the small damage saving switches for when you are in the yellow.
- Once the four subsystems are dead switch back to Even Odds and let Hope buff you up again.
- Shift to Relentless Assault to do your damage, and Solidarity when you need to heal. It is really critical that you make strategic use of your potions here to heal small damage! The more often that you switch out, the less your damage flows.

If you follow the advice above you should have very little trouble taking out the boss!

After the fight you should receive a Uranimite and Plautus's Workshop as spoils, and your Crystarium should now expand to

You get a nice CS of the burning airship crashing, and then another one showing up. But it gets taken out by yet another ship - which lands and disgorges what turns out to be some allies! A most excellent conclusion to an otherwise challenging boss battle!

The game asks you to save - do that - and then sit back and watch the nice CS of Nautilus and the continuing adventures of Sazh and Van - remember Sazh and Van? As we watch them we unlock the Achievement/Trophy Instrument of Shame - and that signals the end of a chapter. Yay!

08A: The City of Dreams

Sanctum Parade

As you know we have not seen Sazh and Van for a while - and as we have recently unlocked more of the Crystarium now would be an excellent time to see to their jobs and their kit, right? Right! So let us do that now!

It seems like there is a large chunk of CP in the bank, but when we apply it to Sazh' Commando job we barely are able to cap it to the full Stage 6 Level 3! We are able to do that - don't get me wrong - but capping Ravager and Synergist is going to require some grinding I am sad to say!

For Van the news is just as bad! With her CP bank we can get her fully capped to Level 3 Stage 6 for Ravager, but only a little is left to apply to Saboteur and Medic! Argh! Well, that is often how it goes in RPG play, but still...

Follow the path to trigger the CS - and get a review of the official report on your team - and as a bonus you get to hear a few comments from the civilians. Lovely! Follow the path for another CS that lets us see the parade that Sazh was talking about. I thought that this was one of the more interesting CS's for whatever that is worth - excellent graphics in this game :)

Follow the path to trigger another CS, then follow the path all the way back to the save point ahead (ignore the path branch to the left) so you can save first, and then board the transport for the park!

Run past the Chocobo and trigger the next CS. Before you follow the path turn around and head back towards the arrivals area and get the Phoenix Down from the Sphere in the path on the far left. Now follow the path to trigger another CS.

Your pet chocobo now takes off and you have something of a mini-game here! Chase it down and discover where it went!

The first spot is on the ground on the path near those fuzzy yellow things. The next is at the gift kiosk, and then to the nearby fountain. Next head over to the group of chocobo adults, and a Treasure Sphere will drop in front of you - take the Star Pendant from it and then continue to follow your chocobo!

08B: No Place Left to Run

Sazh's Eidolon Battle

Follow the path to the save point and use it, then continue on to trigger the CS and learn that Sazh plans to turn himself in to PSICOM. He wants to see his son. Van comes really close to telling Sazh what actually happened but before she can they get attacked! Ah you have to love the government and their perfect timing! Use the conveniently placed save point and then fight your way along the well-marked path until you encounter the first of the new mobs we will find - the Zwerg metrodroids.

Libra them and then take them out, then grab the Spica Defenders from the Treasure Sphere - these are one of Sazh's weapons. Fight your way along and grab the Guardian Amulet from the Sphere, and then hit the save point and continue along the path to trigger the CS.

Van and Sazh, meet Midnight Reaper - Midnight Reaper, meet Van and Sazh!

Right, so this is a boss fight but it is not as bad as some of the previous ones! To win this long fight what you want to do is keep an eye on your health - especially when it says it is going to fire its cannon. Make sure you debuff it and get Shell and Protect cast on you, then simply deal damage to stagger it and then clock it good, healing as needed. This is a battle of attrition - you want to chip away at its health while maintaining yours. Easy-peasy-lemon-squeezy!

After the fight you get a CS in which Sazh's son runs up and hugs him. The reunion is brief and then his son gets turned into crystal! Having completed his Focus - capturing you - his task is done. Of course now you have been captured - bummer.

The recording was something of a bummer - it would have been better if Van had told him first I think. Man she is evil...

We chase after Van - and get a CS of her - and then confront her. I don't think this is going down the way that the evil Colonel anticipated it would. Sazh does not have it in him - and just when you think it is over, it is time for an Eidolon Battle! Lovely!

-- Sazh Eidolon Battle --

This is basic - switch to Tide Turner to buff and debuff and Libra while that is happening, then switch to War & Peace to heal, then Dualcasting to start doing damage and building the Gestalt. Use potions and switch to War & Peace as needed, rinse and repeat until the meter is filled and then trigger Gestalt. Dead easy that one!

Nice race car ride and an easy 5-star battle that adds another ATB Level for Sazh!

Now that we have sort of resolved the conflict between Sazh and Van Sazh does something I was not expecting - puts the barrel to his head and pulls the trigger!

Van is taken prisoner, Sazh's body is crated up, and the evil Colonel seems to have won... The game says save - so we save. The Achievement/Trophy Instrument of Wrath unlocks, signaling the end of another chapter - and this one was a really short chapter compared to the others wasn't it? Still the story moves on, and from what was said, Sazh failed in offing himself, since you cannot execute someone who is already dead, let alone put them on trial!

09A: The Sanctum Skyfleet

Clearance Granted

We get the long view of the PSICOM fleet and rejoin the rest of our team who are watching the news broadcast that details Van and Sazh being brought to the Capital City to be tried and, no doubt, executed.

Now before we do anything else lets see to our jobs and kit, starting with Lightning - who we can raise to Level 3 Commando with the full Stage 6 cap. That chews up most of her CP though, but you can still raise a little in Ravager... For Hope we fully cap-off Ravager and raise a bit in Medic, while for Fang we barely scratch her Commando level. For Snow we fully cap off Commando, and get a sizable chunk of Ravager complete

Now that we have managed all of that go ahead and hit the nearby save point and save!

This might feel a little strange but our team is spread out along the path here and as you approach each one you can talk to them to hear what is on their minds. Yeah... Weird. When you are ready to depart talk to Fang's buddy over on the left of the path - he will ask if you are sure that you want to leave - well yeah, we are sure. Let's go!

The ship we are taking off in is a PSICOM freighter - and after a touching scene of bonding with Hope we get a CS of the Big Man In Charge and Colonel Librarian. Or is she that teacher from that music video?

Your rebel pilot has a close moment with the air control geek but your codes are good - well they have to be good, otherwise we will get shot down before even getting close to the ship! Once we dock we get a CS of our team disembarking and then we are attacked! Yeah we did not fool anyone with our disguises did... Wait... Oh man! We forgot the disguises!

Fang points out the path we need to take and, after a series of fights up we go! Once you are on top activate the lift control and then jump up so that you are conveniently lifter. Climb the lift and jump up on the pipes to the platform above, then immediately go right and empty the Treasure Sphere of its 4 Digital Circuits, and then follow the path. As you can see there is only one way for you to go - to the big glowy door!

09B: The Palamecia

Grinding Spot

It's okay though - Fang has a plan! Okay before we try out Fang's plan, first head to the right to get the nugget of Milerite from the Treasure Sphere - after you take out the Deckdrones - which I point out are a new mob for us, so you did Libra them, right? Ahead is another pair of Deckdrones and a PSICOM Dragoon - the Dragoon also being new to us so be sure to ID him as well!

There is a conveniently placed save point here - so after the fights go ahead and use that to save. You may also take a look at the shop network - most of them have some new stuff for sale and there should be another new shop listed!

If you are doing the grind to maintain route and not just playing through and letting the levels fall where they will, you are aware that your team is presently not at cap on most of their jobs. Right now you have 4 of your team on your roster - Lightning, Fang, Hope, and Snow.

The place we are in at the moment has three groups of mobs close together and near a save point - the first group is a pair of Deckdrones that is worth 282 CP, is a very fast fight, and usually gives you spoils. The second group of mobs is a pair of Deckdrones and a PSICOM Dragoon, is a very fast fight and is worth 445 CP and also tends to give up spoils. Finally there is a group of 6 Deckdrones further along that gives a very nice 705 CP and also tends to give spoils.

You see where I am going with this, right? This is a good spot for grinding CP *and* picking up some Gil and components for upgrading kit! Whether you decide to stop here and cap off your jobs or not is up to you - I chose to because of the convenience of the spot and my childlike desire to upgrade my kit as quickly as I could while picking up some Gil... Even though at this point I am not sure that upgrading your kit makes all that much a difference outside of the boss fights.

Your situation is probably pretty close to mine, which means to cap off the jobs you will need around 19,650 for Snow, 25K for Hope, 27K for Lightning, and 40,800 or so for Fang. Obviously grinding out the whole 40K for Fang is not practical in one go - it takes about 4 minutes to do all three fights and save, which translates to just over 20,000 CP an hour - so picking Lightning as the target, we can easily grind out the 27K she needs in a little over an hour, and that should be our goal!

Okay I messed up on the goal... Because I was grinding I popped my iPod ear buds in and listened to an audio book - Neal Stephenson's Snow Crash - and got so wrapped up in the story with my grinding sort of on auto-pilot that I ended up doing just under 2 hours! Woops!

About 1 hour and 45 minutes worth of grinding netted me 41,810 CP, and 67 Digital Circuits, 3 Torn Leather, 2 Smooth Hides, 10 Credit Chips, 5 Incentive Chips, and 55 Silicone Oil. Whew! The chips are Gil as they are only really good for being sold to the shops - and total 17,500 Gil - not a bad profit!

The end result is everyone's job is capped off at Level 3, Stage 6, and everyone but Fang having a healthy amount of banked CP, which will make the upgrades coming in the next chapter that much easier! Excellent!

Follow the path along the area where we fought the third group and use the double-jump-point to access the upper walkway. Before you continue to the left head right and take out the Dragoon guarding the Treasure Sphere here, and then collect the 3 Incentive Chips (a nice bit of Gil that) before turning around and following the path. You take out a pair of Dragoons here, and then a trio of Deckdrones a bit further on.

Head across the bridge to the next walkway and take out a mixed group of a Dragoon and Deckdrones, which you will make very short work of. Beyond them is another double-jump-point, after which you will grab 4 flasks of Silicone Oil from the Sphere on the left before you work your way through a few more fights - which are worth doing if just for the spoils so I suggest not avoiding them...

After the last fight you exit the walkways and re-enter the ship, and get a brief CS in which we are reunited with Sazh and Van - and we see what happened from the point where Sazh did not - as it turns out - off himself! I know I thought that he actually had shot himself, but now that I think on it him going out that way did not really make sense. Colonel Librarian - that nasty wicked bad old girl - puts in an appearance, and humiliates Sazh. Every time they do a close-up of Vanille I keep hearing Jessica Rabbit's voice in my head - "I'm not really bad, I'm just drawn that way!"

At this point we learn a few things that we did not know - for instance that Van and Fang are hundreds of years old! We are treated to a CS of them being de-crystallized, which is rather cool - and clearly from the way that it happened it was not an accident or an unplanned event. It is just as clear that the L'Cie were not aware that they could be recalled - which gives them something in common with a lot of retired Marines.

The CS now shifts back to our team - with Snow taking charge. The battle mode changes again and Lightning is the lead - and look, there is a convenient save point! Go use it!

Nearby is a mixed group of Raiders and Infiltrators to defeat while that annoying alarm rings in the background. In the next group there are three Infiltrators and a PSICOM Huntress - the Huntress being new to us, so be sure to ID her while we fight them!

The path branches here - and the yellow arrow indicates that it heads to the right - but before we go that way why not take out the bad guys straight ahead? Why not indeed! There are a pair of Raiders and a Huntress here - so if you did not fully ID the previous Huntress you should be able to manage that here - and good on ya! We are getting close to unlocking the Trophy/Achievement for ID'ing mobs!

Keep heading straight and you will transition to a new area in which there is a group that includes a pair of Infiltrators and a Raider. After you take them out you will spot the save point here - may as well use that. Now turn around and head back to the previous area and take the branch - which is now on our left coming back - before you go though, check out that view!

As you take the branch you will spot the Treasure Sphere - grab the Lifesaber - yeah I saw Lifesaber for a second too. That is another one of Lightning's weapons we can tick off the list now!

Just before the next branch point you get to fight a group that includes a pair of Huntresses and then, at the branch, a Viking - which is a mech unit and a type of mob that is new to us, so be sure to ID it! I love the way that they knock it into the air when it is staggered - and how it actually takes a little damage when it falls back to the ground. Bad Viking! No donut!

Directly ahead is a Treasure Sphere with an Ember Ring - and after you grab that, to your left is a group that consists of a pair of Raiders and a pair of Huntresses - nice quick fight that! The deck tilts up here and at the top there is a pair of Raiders and another Viking for us to fight - a nice brisk fight with a lot of deck work, but you know what to do here by now!

As you come around the bend here there is a convenient save point - so use that and then continue along the path. Battle your way along the path until you get to a Treasure Sphere in which you will find a Pandoran Spear - one of Fang's weapons you can now cross off the list.

09C: Time to Split

Thermadon Battle

Now move ahead for a CS in which you see Sazh and Van being treated to an opportunity to escape - how excellent! I did not know that Van knew how to use heavy weapons! Well, anyway they have themselves a good escape, and Sazh reassures Van that she is not the pile of poo that she thinks she is - clearly Sazh is a deeper pool of philosophy than I first suspected!

Right so we are back in control of Sazh and Van after a very long absence! First thing we should do is take a look at our Crystarium - capping off their jobs will not be a problem as they both have a significant amount of CP banked, so go ahead and do that now, and then save.

Around the corner is a Flanitor and a Flanborg - the later being new to us, so be sure to ID it! Use the controls to open the hatch and fight another Flanborg - and you reach a place where the path T's. The left branch is the logical one for the path, so let us head along the right branch first!

Turn right and use the controls to open the hatch here and kill the trio inside and then grab the Royal Armlet from the Treasure Sphere inside this compartment. Head back out and follow the corridor to loop around and clear the left branch before backtracking to the hatch with the 12 Murky Oozes in the Treasure Sphere. Now open the hatch to engage the CS trigger - and hear the declaration of Code Purple!

Van decides that running and hiding is not the way, which is something of a change for her if you think about it - and then we get the same Code declaration from the rest of the team's POV and we are back in control of Lightning!

Run ahead and the hatch will lower, allowing you to pass into the next area, where there is a convenient save point - so go ahead and save your game. As you can see the area T's here - and since we are in the business of killing things we should go ahead and clear the area immediately around us of mobs - so go ahead and do that now!

To the left is a trio of Vikings that makes for a very nice fight, and then to the right is a pair of Vespид Soldiers - which are a new mob for us so be sure to ID them! Following the path along the right side (the Vespид side) and staying on the outside ring you will encounter a pair of PSICOM Raiders and a Thermadon - the later being new to us so be sure that you ID it.

There is a Treasure Sphere with a White Cape on the ramp to the right so grab that, and then continuing along the outer ring counter-clockwise you will encounter another trio of Viking - which you kill for a very easy 960 CP!

Continue around ignoring the exit and take on the two Vespид Soldiers and the Thermadon just past it. Now take out the Infiltrator and the Vespид Soldiers beyond it, and then enter the ramp to the right and empty the Treasure Sphere there of the Pain Dampeners, and then backtrack to the ramp leading to the first inner ring where you will fight another trio of Vikings, and then follow the ring counter-clockwise to fight a pair of Huntresses.

Another Thermadon waits at the next juncture, and after you defeat that and continue on to the next juncture and move in to the inner ring, where you will face a Viking and a Huntress. Follow the inner ring counter-clockwise to a golden Treasure Sphere from which you will loot a Perfect Conductor - and then run forward for a preemptive strike on a pair of Vespид Soldiers!

After this very brief fight continue along to the next golden Treasure Sphere, from which you will loot a piece of Rhodochrisite - and you have pretty much cleared the area. Some of the groups will have re-spawned by now, so you can take them out again if you like - and you may actually want to do that if you chose not to grind CP earlier when I did it. The reason that we cleared this area was to pick up a decent amount of CP and of course loot from

the spoils, but this is a good place to grind if you need to! If you decide to grind here a smart way to do that would be to head directly to the save point that is on the ramp where we entered the zone on the outer ring, save, and then reload so that everything re-spawns!

Ready to leave now? Good! Head for the exit marked on the radar map by the yellow arrow - this triggers a CS in which you see Colonel Librarian that wicked nasty bad girl... Err... Yeah, and the Lord High Mucky-muck, who declares "Code White" after Colonel Librarian (okay her name is not really Colonel Librarian - it is actually Jihl Nabaat, and if you check her bio you will see that she is a PSICOM Officer who, despite her dirty-girl looks is actually pretty smart and ruthless. She really is not a nice person if you have not figured that out yet, and I suspect that duty is not really what motivates her to make the bloody decisions that she makes - and by all appearances likes to make. Also the guy on the throne is not really called Lord High Mucky-muck - his real name is Galenth Dysley, and he is the Sanctum Primarch.).

The CS cuts to Sazh and Van - with Sazh in charge - in an area that is clearly not friendly! Thankfully there is a very convenient save point three steps in front of you - so use that now!

Heading counter-clockwise around the outer ring we fight a pair of Flanitor, then a pair of Flanborg and a Flanitor. At the exit there is a Thermadon - kill it and then instead of taking the exit continue along the ring - fight your way to the Treasure Sphere with 6 Segmented Carapaces, and then head into the inner core once you reach the place where we entered the zone near the save point.

The inner core holds a Thermadon and some Vespид Soldiers for you to kill. After you clear the core grab the Phoenix Down from the Treasure Sphere, and then hit the exit ramp to trigger a CS in which you try to escape and are confronted by a mixed group - but you know what to do here!

09D: Time to Split: Starboard Weather Deck

Karavinka Battle

Once you finish them off we jump to Lightning and the rest of the team who are on the outer deck of the ship, and notice that it is slowing down. A threat immediately presents itself, and you are once again thrust into battle! Actually before you start fighting go ahead and use the save point that is a few steps away to your left.

The path heads to the left but as you can see there are some mobs behind you (to the right) that we should take out just out of general principles. Once you have killed both groups hit the Treasure Sphere in the corner for the Whistlewind Scarf, and then backtrack and head along the main path fighting your way along.

After two groups of Soldiers you will face some Dragoons and a Viking, and then loot the Perfect Conductor from the Treasure Sphere on the right. Now head toward the left side of the path to take on another pair of Dragoon and a Viking. Take the ramp down to the next lower area and tackle a mixed group of Soldiers and Deckdrones, and then a second mixed group by the ramp up on the other side of the area. There is a large group of Deckdrones in the back between the ramps that you can kill if you like - it is optional obviously but there are enough of them to make this a challenging fight. It is worth 987 CP and usually results in a decent spoils drop.

At the top of the ramp is a save point - you should probably hit that - and then go down the next ramp and take out another group of Deckdrones. You will want to clear all of the mixed groups out of the area before you use the hydraulic ramp to enter the lower pit area and claim the 300 Gil from the Treasure Sphere there.

Eventually you will trigger a CS in which you see a boss mob flying through the air - and you have your first experience with a Karavinka Striker - or Kara for short. As this is a new mob to us we want to make the effort to ID it, right?

The Kara can hit pretty hard, so mind your health. Switching back and forth as needed to heal is the way to go, but you want to end this battle as quickly as you can so be aggressive! After you kill it you will get the Soulfont Talisman - the second and last accessory in the Shell Category - so good on ya!

After the battle you get a gratifying visual of the thing dying - but then another one shows up! Just when you think you are going to be in another fight alone Van and Sazh show up - excellent! The gang is all here! And just in time because the second Kara shows up right about now.

These things have a nasty special attack - come to think on it, their regular attack is pretty nasty too! Still as nasty as it is you should be able to take it out in good order, and after the fight you loot a Blessed Talisman from it!

As this one dies you all gather around Vanille to welcome her back - and her and Fang have a tearful reunion. Fang embarrasses Snow by dropping to her knees and hiking up Van's skirts to look at her L'Cie mark. They start to fill Sazh in on the plan, and then a new threat appears!

Fang and Van combine their talents to capture one of the giant flying Kara and they use it to escape the ship, riding on its back! Flying the Kara they head to the ship on which the Primarch is in and blast their way inside. We get a brief narrative from Van, and then everyone groans to their feet and discover that they have landed very close to the throne room!

09E: Luck Be a Lady

Ramp Fight

The CS ends with a mini-tutorial on Battle Team Formation - as now that we have the entire team together again we need to know this stuff! The tut explains that you can now select the team within the Paradigm menu and not just their jobs - and it points out that each different iteration of the team will end up with its own Paradigm deck sets, and you may want to cycle through them and create the decks you want to have active for each given combination. That is actually a good idea.

Once you are happy with your team/deck combos hit the nearby save point and save your progress and your configurations in one go, and then activate the control panel to deploy the ramp - and run down it! At the bottom you will do battle with a trio of Infiltrators and a PSICOM Destroyer - the later being a new mob to us, so be sure to ID him!

There are three bridges that you can activate using the controls below. Go ahead and activate all three, and then head down the one that is on the right as you face the main path from the foot of the bridge we came down to get to this area. At the bottom is a Thermadon and a PSICOM Destroyer for you to pummel!

There are two bridges you can activate here - one going up and one going down - so activate them then take the one going up - and grab the 2 Rune Bracelets from the Treasure Sphere up here! Now run down the bridge that goes down and grab the Umbra from the Treasure Sphere down there. The Umbra is one of Snow's weapons BTW.

From here there are two bridges that you can activate - one going down in the direction of the main path, and one that goes across to the other platform - activate both and then use the one that crosses to the other platform, where you will fight two Huntresses, a Destroyer, and a Reaver - the Reaver being a new mob for us, so be sure to ID it!

After the fight you can activate two more bridges here - again one going down and one going across - so activate both and, once again, take the one going across. On the other side take out the bad guys and then activate the two bridges there - one going up the other down. Take the one going up and grab the Librascope from the Treasure Sphere there, and then activate the bridge going up on this level and grab the Pain Dampener from the upper level there.

Now run down, and then down the next bridge, and then down again, and grab the Gil from the Treasure Sphere before you activate two more bridges here - one down, and one across. Take the bridge across and kill the pair of Raiders and the Thermadon, then activate the bridge going down and the one going across before taking the one going across. Whew, this gets complicated doesn't it?

There is a Reaver, a pair of Dragoons, and a pair of Raiders - kill them all and then activate the bridge down here and take it to the next level below, where you will fight a pair of Huntresses and a Destroyer. Activate the bridge down and the one across here, then take the one across - and you will fight four Dragoons and a Reaver! As before there is a bridge down and a bridge across to activate - do that and then take the one across and fight the pair of Infiltrators, a Destroyer, and a Thermadon.

Activate the bridge down and then run all the way down to the very back of the area here and take the Gold Bangle from the Treasure Sphere. Now run back up and take the bridge across to the left, then the next bridge across and take the bridge down here and run all the way to the back of the area and grab the Perfect Conductor from the Treasure Sphere. Excellent! We are now ready to do the last part in this zone!

Head back up and take the bridge across to the right, then take the bridge down and grab the Ethersole from the Treasure Sphere. Now hit the save point on the other side of this platform, and then head for the exit to trigger the CS.

09F: A Focus Revealed

First Barhandelus Fight

Colonel Librarian and the Lord High Mucky-much are here waiting for us - and Colonel Librarian puts herself in the hero's slot only to be betrayed by her Lord and Master - who it turns out is a Fal'Cie! Now the truth comes out - you learn that Cocoon is nothing more than a factory for raising humans - raising them to be used by the Fal'Cie for their nefarious purposes!

You may have guessed that this is the Boss Fight for this Chapter - and yeah, it is: Barhandelus the Fal'Cie must die, and you must do the killing!

Okay you know the drill - you start with the Right Pauldron and then the Left Pauldron, then switch to the Right Ailette and then the Left Ailette, and once all four are destroyed, you target Barhandelus and pound that Fal'Cie into the dirt, oh yeah!

A few things about this fight - first, you get plenty of warning that he is going to unleash his special attack because he charges up to do it - and that actually takes him a while. You know you need to make sure you have fully healed your team before he cuts loose with his special attack, since you have no way of knowing what two members of the team are going to get the major hit from it. As the fight starts you should cast Shell and Protect on the party before you do anything else, since you really need those to mitigate the damage that this guy can dish out.

Once you have Shell and Protect cast it is simply a matter of hitting him with everything you have as quickly as you can. Use your potions to heal after every attack, and switch to your Medic when you get pounded by his special. If you are using the potions consistently you will not have to switch out to Medic as often, which means you will quickly stagger him, and thus be able to deliver some serious hurt to him. Obviously you want to maximize your time in stagger, because that will ultimately shorten the fight.

After you defeat him you will receive 6,000 CP for the fight, some random loot, and your Crystarium will expand another level! You then get to watch him die - sort of - because he is back! Yeah, you cannot kill Fal'Cie by killing the form that they occupy - in order to kill a Fal'Cie for real, you have to use Ragnorok - a Demi-God Eidolon. Now you do not know this, but two of you have received the Focus to summon Ragnorok. What two? Well, ask yourself this - which one lost her memory? And which one pretended to lose her memory because she could not face the truth of her Focus? Right! Fang and Van!

Barhandelus then tells them something that none of them are prepared to accept - and the CS cuts to the ship pretty much coming apart around their ears! As if things are not already bad, here comes the L'Cie hunter Cid, determined to blow us out of the sky! Things go a little wonky and then a little sideways as the ship you are in starts fighting the battle on its own - and then passes through the shield that is supposed to be able to keep ships - and people - out of the city!

Passing through the shield lets you escape from the attackers, and as you fly through the city your attention is drawn to what is outside of the airship, so Sazh is not paying attention to what is approaching in front of it - and you end up flying directly into a building! Well, sort of - it is clear that just before you actually hit the building the ship does something magically odd so chances are we are not dead!

The game prompts you to insert Disc 3 - we will have to do that to find out if we die then, right? Once you insert Disc 3 you are prompted to save - do that - and we cut to a CS in which we are inside some sort of construct. Van offers that it looks like a piece of Pulse. Fang wonders why they would keep a piece of Pulse under the floorboards, and that leads the team to discuss the whole combined Focus in detail.

Van tries to cheer Snow up - and he is looking pretty stunned - and then Van voices what I know I - and probably you - were thinking - why would a Cocoon Fal'Cie want to destroy Cocoon? We do not get an answer to that question - yet - what we do get is a new Trophy/Achievement unlocked: Instrument of Truth. That means the end of

another Chapter!

10A: What Fal'Cie Want

Pulsework Knight Fight

At the moment you only have control over Lightning - none of the other members of the team are on the Crystarium Menu - but go ahead and cap off Lightning's jobs to the Stage 7 cap (there is no Level change at this point, so all of her jobs are still Level 3 they just have higher stats).

Once you have done that, why don't you check your kit, make sure you have enough potions and other expendable items, and if not why then pop into the store and stock up. Check to see if you have items to sell to the store for Gil, and you may as well upgrade weapons and/or Accessories if you have the resources to do that. Once you have completed all of the chores, go ahead and save again and then take a look around the space we are in!

We can actually talk to our team members if we want to - and they have some interesting things to say, so wander around to their locations and chat them up why don't you? Van is way up the path so head on up to chat her and then continue along the path and talk to Hope. After that, why, go ahead and run into the next area to be prompted to leave. When you say yes you get a CS with Snow, and then you are back in charge of the party - so pause for a second, we have some more chores to do...

Start with the Crystarium and cap all of their current jobs off now, and then use the nearby save point to lock the changes in. Now head up the stairs of the train station to trigger a CS - and you discover that all is not as it seems at all! Before you can say WHAT?! You get attacked! These are Pulsework Knights - and yes, these are new to us, so be sure that you ID them!

After you win the fight the game tells us that Role Development is Unlocked. According to the notice our team members can now assume all combat roles, and we can now freely select all members of our combat team. Evidently that means that we will start to be able to learn all of the jobs, and abilities - when they are unlocked for each member that is.

The CS continues with our faithful buds wandering around and we learn that this is the Fifth Ark. The Fal'Cie created armies of living mech warriors and then concealed them all over the place in Arks - and this is one of them! A Pulse Ark on Cocoon - who would have thunk it?

10B: The Power Within

Ooze Battle

As the CS ends another confrontation begins - so be prepared to fight your way through the area and to ID the mobs we have yet to ID! Before you follow the path down though, turn around and clear this upper deck of mobs first! Once you have them well in hand, head down the stairs along the path to confront a Pulsework Knight and a Circuitron - the later being a new mob for us so be sure to ID it!

There are two Knights in the corner guarding a Treasure Sphere, so kill them and grab the Heroes Amulet from the Sphere. Head up the stairs and around and take out the pair of bombs and the Knight, then head around and down to take out the trio of bombs and grab the 8 Bomb Shells from the Treasure Sphere. Backtrack back on to the path and fight your way along to the save point and use it!

Ahead of you down the stairs is a pack of Noctilucale (Glowing Snail Thingy's) which are new to us, so make sure that you ID one, and then head towards the back of the area and the tunnel entrance on the far side (the deeper one) in which you will find a group of green glowing Phosphoric Ooze and some of the snails. Make sure that you ID one of the Ooze as it is new to us, then grab the Saint's Amulet from the Treasure Sphere in the rear of the tunnel.

Now fight your way along the path (the tunnel to the left) to the end - there are two routes you can take, both of which use jump points. The path continues to the left, but we want to take the right hand jump point first - so that we can backtrack into the other tunnel and grab the 10 vials of Medicinal Oil from the Sphere there. Now we can backtrack to the split and take the left-hand jump point and follow the path.

You may have noticed that one of the Ooze we just fought was different than the others - it was in fact an Alchemic Ooze - so try to ID it - if you have been following the walkthrough you should now unlock the Trophy/Achievement "Loremaster" (Discern the full attributes of 100 enemies - which is worth 80 GP, a fairly hefty number for this game). At the end of the tunnel is a jump point - follow it around to the split and cut to the right to grab the Rainbow Anklet from the Sphere there before you continue on and use the save point just ahead.

When you head through the door ahead you will find yourself facing two mobs we have not seen before - one called Skata'ne, the other called Stikini - bird-like creatures that have a sort of drunken boxing style to them. These two are actually pretty nasty, with disabling and poisoning attacks and they can do a fair bit of damage if they both target the same member of your team - fair warning here mate, you will want to keep an eye on health bars.

The battle should not take too long - they can dish out some hurt but they have really poor defenses, so you should be able to take them down even if you have to switch to the medic deck the whole time!

Hit the nearby jump point to go down and fight another Skat, then follow the path for another double fight, As you follow the ledge to the right you will note that there are two jump points here - the first takes you to the ledge below the one you are on and gives you access to the bridge from this side of the area. The other one takes you down to a ledge on the other side, that leads to the far side of the area and the door that continues along the path, so in theory if you wanted to avoid the fight on the bridge you can take the second jump point to do that - but why would you want to avoid a fight?!

The fight on the bridge is with the pair of the birds and a bomb, and once you are done you can head through the nearby door and hit the save point mid-way down this hall. If you check the Crystarium now you will get the notice that all of the jobs are now unlocked, and that you can learn new jobs simply by learning one of the abilities connected to a new job. What that means in simple terms is that if you wanted to you could burn through your banked CP to level the new jobs...

At the moment Lightning's jobs are Commando, Ravager, and Medic, and they are all capped off at Level 3 Stage 7. Getting another job to that cap will take an enormous amount of CP - getting all of the jobs to that cap level will take a Gi-normous amount of CP! Clearly that is not something we want to do at this moment - rather that is a task we

should save until we are in a really good grinding spot where we can pull in major CP with minimal effort, so for now I plan to stick with the jobs that I have on my team members and worry about adding and capping new ones later. I suggest that you do the same?

The next set of doors triggers a CS in which we discover some more large living war beasties that are in suspended mode... Until we step forward that is! This mechanical monstrosity is called a Berserker and it is, as you no doubt suspect, something of a piece of work to fight and dangerous. Lightning tells you that you can win if you stay focused - not bad advice really!

Obviously getting it staggered as quick as you can is the way to go, so you will want to use potions to spot-heal instead of shifting to Medic really often. The fight took a little longer than I was expecting, and when the thing hit hard it hit very hard!

After you defeat both Berserkers hit the Treasure Sphere in the corner for its Rigel (one of Sazh's Weapons) and then go through the door nearby the sphere and activate the controls to lower the lift and use the save point just outside the lift at the bottom.

You are entering another train station platform - to the far right on the first track is a Treasure Sphere but before you empty it you need to kill the trio of Imp's here - and as these are new to us try to ID them as well! The Sphere has an Auric Amulet in it, so go ahead and grab that.

On the other side there are some Imps and Phosphoric Ooze to kill before you head into the tunnel they were guarding and continue along the path. As you follow the path you will encounter more Ooze and Imps, but these will not be a problem for you. Ahead the track is blocked and you need to cross to the other side and double back, but first you have to defeat the Greater Behemoth here - you want to try to ID that one as well as it is new to us.

He hits pretty hard with that saw blade hand but you should be able to complete that fight by spot healing with potions. You will face more Ooze and Imps before you jump down to another Treasure Sphere and grab the Alcanto from it (one of Hope's weapons).

On the platform ahead are more of the snails - and mind their poison as it can take you down pretty quick if you are not paying attention. Jump to the next platform to fight some snails and another Greater Behemoth. That one did not seem as tough as the previous one to me fight-wise, in fact he went down pretty quick, and once you take him down you should grab the 7 Gargantuan Claws from the Treasure Sphere nearby.

You can avoid the fights here entirely by simply taking the stairs down instead of jumping up to the platform if you want to, but you will miss out on the claws if you do that... Now jump back down and take the stairs to the far platform, where you will fight another Greater Behemoth - maybe it is just me but didn't that one seem even weaker than the previous two?

Down at the next platform is yet another Greater Behemoth, but this one has some Imp buddies with him. This fourth one was a little tougher - it actually healed itself nearly to full health when it was almost dead, something I did not notice the other BG's do...

At the end of this track are four more Imps guarding a Treasure Sphere - make quick work of them and then grab the Metal Armband from the Sphere! Snag the Ethersol from the Sphere on the platform beside the save point and then use the save point before you continue along the path and trigger a CS.

Snow recognizes a Sanctum Officer standing on the platform ahead - Cid Raines - and Lightning goes a little postal on him! It turns out that Cid is also a L'Cie, and he fills you in on the 4-1-1 of the events and what amounts to your destiny. It is not a pretty picture. A big chunk of the plot gets revealed here, and we learn why things are the way that they are. Cid's position on this is clear - he wants to see Cocoon fall because he wants to see the Maker returned to the world. The phrase psychopath does not really do justice to Cid, you know what I mean?

10C: The Dreams of Man

Cid Battle

-- Cid Fight --

Okay, you knew we were going to have to fight him, right?

This is the boss fight for this chapter. I am glad that the Combat Clinic deck is loaded for this fight, because that special attack of his (once he grows the wings) is deadly enough to take any one of the team down to a heartbeat of life! Combat Clinic lets you quickly heal up when he is recharging, which you will need to do many times. Simple deck management was really all that it took to master this guy, and you should find it the same..

When he cut loose with his kung-fu special attack I swear it felt like fighting Chuck Norris! And everyone knows you do NOT fight Chuck Norris! Throughout the fight Van kept saying "Oh yeah?" only she sounds like Little Nell from Rocky Horror, which introduces some very disturbing mental imagery to this fight, but thankfully she did not break out into song..

If you have trouble with this fight you may want to try to prepare for it - use your shrouds, and going into the fight be sure that you cast Slow on Cid. Once he transforms with the wings he starts using a pattern of attack and defense - the attack that starts with him glowing and then exploding into light is very very dangerous. If you are not nearly fully healed when it happens he will kill you - so once he transforms you want to keep an eye on your health. Use your potions strategically, and try to stagger him as quick as you can to dish out the hurt!

If you still have trouble on your own just do the following:

- Add the deck Attrition (Med/Sab/Sen)
- Cast Aegisol
- Cast Fortisol
- Start the fight and switch to Attrition
- When Cid has all 4 debuffs switch to Relentless Assault and work on his stagger
- Use potions strategically between attacks
- When he is in Guard Mode switch to Combat Clinic and heal up fully
- Switch back to Relentless Assault and pound him
- When his debuffs wear off, switch back to Attrition and re-apply all four

Using the strategy above - the same that I used in the video - you will easily 5-star this fight and you will not die. You may have noticed that I sort of compacted all of the dialogue in this video into one section (grin). I was shooting for a haiku but I did not have much to work with - I still think it is funny though :)

If you fail with the above strategy chances are it will happen towards the end of the fight when he is closer to death - because that is when he starts spamming debuffs on to you and buffs on to himself. If that happens you either had really bad luck or you were not staying on top of your health with potions and Combat Clinic...

You will get a sense for when he comes out of Guard mode - and you should be fully healed before that happens - and while you will be dealing most of your damage when he is not in Guard mode do not shirk on smacking him around while he is! Every little bit of damage helps get this battle over quicker!

After you defeat him you will get as spoils the ticket for the Moogleworks and a Tetradic Crown - the Crystarium will then expand again, and Cid will die like a character in a good Spaghetti Western. As he is dying he gives you some good advice, and then he turns into a crystal! I guess losing to us was his Focus! How about that!

Head along the path following Snow and you will come to a save point - before you use that go ahead and load the Crystarium and level one of your current jobs (I know, you were thinking you would cap off a bunch but at this point

Lighting only has enough CP to get Commando partially raised) and then go shopping to replace all the stuff you used up in the past level of fights. Now you can save!

The inability to cap even one jobs may be a bit disappointing - but bear in mind that one of the things you leveled was health here and a lot of it! This is an RPG after all, and everyone knows that RPG's require a fair bit of grinding. You might be thinking that you have a decision to make now - continue on or find a grinding spot. It is understandable that you might be considering this now, as you are heading for the end of this chapter - and in fact the first part of the chapter that follows this one will be a LOT easier if you are capped-off, but if you are considering stopping to grind, please do not. I'll explain why in a bit.

Now that we have the chores out of the way, use the controls on the lift and then fight the bombs waiting for you as the lift lowers. This is a long ride! At the bottom head down the ramp and through the two doors and you will find yourself on the end of a bridge facing another fight. There is a ledge to the left that circles around the area - you can use that to avoid the fight if you want to or are in a hurry, but I say let us fight!

The fight is between a Pulsework Knight and a pair of Ooze - and you! After you jump down and follow the path you do battle with a pair of Knights and a pair of Ooze, and then To the left as you exit the area is the ledge that you would have arrived at had you taken the one above, but then you would have missed out on two nice battles mate!

Inside the hallway here is a save point - may as well use it now right?

Entering the next area triggers a CS in which a bunch of bombs and Knights are unleashed upon you! Once you stagger them the knights die fast - and the three together are worth almost 800 CP which is not bad. The four bombs are only worth a bit over 500 CP, so this is clearly not a great grinding spot.

In the next area is a pair of Knights and a Sikini - and the Stik should be your priority since one of its debuffs will paralyze you. Halfway down the next hall is a Treasure Sphere with a Feymark in it - you want to grab that mate - and then continue to the end of the bridge ahead where you will kill a pair of Knights and some Imps.

Below you is another bridge with a Greater Behemoth on it that can be reached either by using the jump point on the bridge - but that is a one-way jump, and you cannot get back up once you take it. If you want to avoid that fight - but I have no idea why you would want to as this guy is a wimp - you can take the ledge at the end of the bridge and use the jump points on it to get to the exit from the bridge below. The upper bridge is accessible from there if for some reason you needed to get back up there - if you wanted to backtrack or whatever, but really, you should go kick that GB's buttoski!

The next area holds four bombs, and the area after that has a Greater Behemoth, a Stik, and a pair of Skat's for you to pound on! Try to take the birds out first as they have a nasty debuff - then take out the GB - who without the interference of the birds is something of a push-over, spinning saw hand or not. This fight was worth 1012 CP - which was a lot considering the minimal effort that we had to put out...

You may have noticed that there are two exits besides the one we came in by - so let us take the one that does not follow the path first! As we enter this area we get a CS and see a Treasure Sphere, and then a Berserker pops out of the door and the doors leading in to this area are locked. Once you defeat the Berserker the doors unlock, so hit the Treasure Sphere for its 3 Electrodes and then backtrack to the previous area.

Following the path to the next area leads to a save point (which you should use) and a lift. You can use the lift controls to move to the next area. You may be thinking that this could be a nice grinding spot, since the string of re-spawning mob groups does tally up to just over 1,900 CP, but there is a better spot coming ahead, so hold off on the grinding for now.

Now that we have that out of the way, head on to the lift and use the controls to send the lift down, where you are immediately jumped by a Stik and two Skat's and further into the area, a Berserker.. Head through the doors at the other end of the area and hit the save point there, and then follow the path on to a bridge where you fight another

pair of Skat's and then a Stik and two Skat's and finally, towards the other end, a pair of Stik's and a Skat.

Head through the doors and into the left side alcove to hit a Treasure Sphere with 2 Otherworldly Bones, and then go through the door at the far end of the hall to trigger a CS in which you see a pair of Berserkers appear. You fight them one at a time, so it is not really a tough fight, and if like me you capped off the main offensive jobs of your crew, the fight was probably over faster than you were expecting as well.

There is a save point to the left of the doors here, so go ahead and use that now. Before you use the controls to open the blast door here you should know that this is the entrance to the area in which you have the next Eidolon fight - and while these are not as tough or as complicated as the boss fights they can be a challenge if you forget that the object is not to beat the Eidolon, but to build its bar and activate it so that you dominate it.

If you did not cap off your offensive jobs yet and you want to so that you are prepared for the next chapter, now is the time to turn around and start grinding... Otherwise use the controls to open the blast door and pass through for a series of long CS's in which you first see the new area from a sort of cinematic view, and then listen to your party chat.

Fang offers you her opinion - that you are in a L'Cie boot camp - and Sazh comes a little bit unglued. Snow vows to be brave and succeed, and proclaims his faith in Serah - and Raines though that last I cannot completely accept. Van throws her lot in with Snow, as does Hope, and Sazh's Choco signs up as well for some comic relief. Fang opposes their plan, acting strange - but wait, we have seen THAT before... We are about to confront her special friend Bahamut - who I have to admit does look rather spiffy!

10D: Terra Incognita

Fang's Eidolon Battle

The Battle Order changes to Fang, Lightning, and Van, with Fang as the lead - you did upgrade her skills as well, right? This is not an intense battle - it is on a timer but even if you spend half the fight healing you should still fill the bar way before the timer becomes an issue! Just keep an eye on your health bars, the Eidolon's bar, and trigger it when it is full and you are set. Easy peasy lemon squeezy!

As you can see in the video I used the Diversity deck and finished the fight with more than 1200 on the clock. I thought this was maybe the easiest Eidolon fight in the game myself...

At the end of the fight Fang gains an ATB segment and you get another CS in which Snow sort of takes credit for being right. Your party walks towards the camera and we fade to black.

When we fade in the battle order changes again - back to Lightning, Van, and Fang - and you head down the long crystal bridge until you trigger another CS that shows you an airship, and then Fang spots a gate to Gran Pulse - and Sazh announces that he is doing the flying! Hope tells you which way up is in a very reassuring way that makes him seem far older than he is, giving a speech that builds up and up - and gets everyone fired up! The scene ends with another fade to black.

We are treated to a reprise of the fireworks in a CS that Van narrates, showing us where every one of our party members was at that moment, and then a view of Sazh flying the airship through the gate and they are attacked by something. Most of the party ends up in free fall, and Fang has to activate her Eidolon to save everyone - which she does - and we get our first look at where Fang and Van come from!

You are prompted to save - do so - and then enjoy a CS that gives an overview of a beautiful land, its animals and ruins. This is certainly not the paradise that is Cocoon, but on the other hand the people that live here are not cattle being fattened for the slaughter by the powers that be... Or are they?

Hope gathers some coconuts - with the choco's help for a spot of comic relief - and Van continues to narrate her bubblegum view before waking up, and introducing us to Gran Pulse! The rest of the party shoes up and reports, and then the choco shows up to warn you that Hope is in trouble!

At this point you unlock another Achievement/Trophy: Instrument of Hope - which signals the end of another chapter!

Remember I told that a good grinding area was coming up, which was why you should pass on grinding back there? The grind area that I was talking about is the first section of the next chapter, which you are about to enter. Before we get to that, I want to touch on the whole issue of grinding... And whether you should wait and do all of your grinds at one time, or break the process up into smaller, mini-grinds. Considering that each of your party members can now learn all six jobs, having them know them can only be a good thing, since at certain points in the game you are locked into using certain party members. The trick here is to make this as painless as you can.

11A: A Fruitless Search

Hope's Eidolon Battle

Before you run forward to find Hope, backtrack to the save point behind you and use it so that you do not have to sit through that series of CS's again if something goes wrong. Now that you have saved, go ahead and follow the path ahead.

A little ways up you will see that the path splits - you can continue straight or turn to the right. The right-hand path leads to a dead end so don't bother with that, just keep going straight. As you pass through the narrowing canyon you run into a group of what looked like flowers but turn out to be Alraune! These are not especially dangerous from a damage point of view but they do have a paralyze ability so go ahead and take them out quickly.

You encounter a pair of Flan next, and then a group of Alraune and a Flan, and finally a Dire Flan by a Treasure Sphere. There is a Partisan in the Sphere (one of Fang's weapons), so you want to grab that now. Ahead is another pair of Flan, followed by a Dire Flan, and finally another mixed group. After this last group STOP!

Ahead of you on the map you will see a marker for a CS - if you move forward from here you will trigger that CS, and you do NOT want to do that if you plan to grind CP to prepare yourself for the next area - and considering that the next area is literally packed with mobs you will have to fight - some of which are pretty tough - this is the best place for you to stop and do that grinding!

So instead of following the path, turn around and head back towards the previous save point (the one that is situated behind where we entered this zone) and you will see that the mobs in between here and the save point have re-spawned! Kill your way to the save point and save, then turn around and work your way to the last mobs before the CS point, remembering NOT to continue on and trigger the CS as that will pretty much end any more grinding here.

You could pick up CP by simply continuing on to the next area and fighting the mobs there, but a good reason not to do that is simple math and time. The mobs on the other side of that CS are stronger than the ones on this side, and will take more time to kill. They also collectively do not add up to as convenient a CP pool and the ones you have here. Let's do the math...

Starting at the save point where we entered the zone, you will pick up 960 CP from Fight 1, 880 CP from Fight 2, 1,160 CP from Fight 3, 960 CP from Fight 4 (This is the Dire Flan near the Treasure Sphere), 880 CP from Fight 5, 960 CP from Fight 6 (another Dire Flan), and 1,160 CP from the final 7th fight. This is where you should stop by the way, as if you continue beyond this point you will trigger the CS and end your grinding run.

So if you add it all up, the run through on the path direction will net you 6,960 CP, and the run back to the save point will net you an additional 4,340 CP for an average total of 11,300 CP per completed trip. A full trip only takes around 10 minutes in total, which is a good average time for grinding point-wise.

It is a good idea to save on every other cycle so that if you mess up and trigger the CS without meaning to, you only lose a small amount of CP having to reload the save point.

How much grinding that you do depends on how much patience you have - I suggest using an audio book to keep you entertained while you grind - that is what I do and it makes all the difference in the world. Ideally you are going to want to cap off all three of the jobs for each team member - their main offensive and defensive jobs and their utility job. If you have the patience - I did but mostly due to the audio books - you can get some leveling in on the alternate jobs as well. It is a good idea... Another good idea - if you decide to cap-off your main jobs - is to do some selective leveling of the secondary jobs to pick up some extra Strength, HP, and Magic points for Lightning, Van, and Hope.

Once you are done grinding, head along the path past the last fight to trigger the CS in which you find Hope, who is

unconscious by the stream. Everyone looks worried, and Hope is still unconscious - Snow goes all pessimistic, and Sazh gets all cup-half-full. Van starts to talk - and Fang cautions her - which probably means that there is someplace or something coming up that they know about but have not told us about for whatever reason, and Hope finally wakes up.

Right, so Hope is acting all weird and out of character - and we all know what that means, right? Eidolon fight!

The battle order changes - Hope is now leader with Fang and Lightning backing him up. Remember, the object here is to fill the meter and then trigger the Eidolon, not kill it, so keep an eye on the meter and on your health, and trigger it when it is full! Using potions to keep from having to shift out of Relentless Assault.

Hope gains an ATB segment and you get a CS that is very encouraging - Van gives him a big sister-hug, and Fang gets defensive. Van gets all narrator again, and someone starts playing the piano, and we fade to black!

11B: A Man's Hope is His Castle Part I

Stone Mission 01

We encounter a L'Cie that has failed its Focus and we learn a little more about what happens to you when you fail your Focus - Snow shows a side that we have not seen much of lately, telling us that we should help the Cie'th - and we are now introduced to something that will become a major part of the game from here on out - Stone Missions.

It is understandable if you were thinking that as there are only 13 chapters to the game, and you are on chapter 11, the game is mostly over, but if that is what you were thinking I have some startling news for you... You are only about half-finished with the game at this point! The first 10 chapters are about half the game, the last 3 the other half! But that is okay! It means we still have a lot more fun and challenge ahead of us, right?

Note: The guide for each Stone Mission is listed in Appendix A: Stone Missions under its mission number. If you are following this walkthrough, whenever there is a Stone Mission to do, I will refer to it by number and name within the body of each section, presuming that you will jump to the specific mission in Appendix A, where the walkthrough continues logically from each subsection. Obviously if you take them out of order the flow of the walkthrough will not be as seamless as it will be if you do them in the order that is laid out in the walkthrough...

Stone Missions for this Subsection:

- Stone Mission 01: Pond Scum
- Stone Mission 02: Goodwill Hunting
- Stone Mission 03: Massif Contamination
- Stone Mission 04: A Hero's Charge
- Stone Mission 05: Joyless Reunion

After you complete Stone Mission 05 and unlock the Kelger's Cup Trophy/Achievement, head North to the save point at the split that we originally entered at and save. Now continue North and fight the Svarog (again), and fight your way through the Alraune and Hybrid Flora, Triffids, and Munchkin. Right where you defeat the Munchkin take the jump point to the left so that you are taking the branching route there, and follow that.

You will immediately fight another group of Munchkin, then a long run to fight a pair of Hybrid Flora, then hit a save point and another Hybrid Flora and some Alraune after that. Bear to the right around the circle and take out the Munchkin and the Leyak, and then grab the Mythril Bangle from the Treasure Sphere here.

Fight your way along and you will face your first Munchkin Maestro, and then just as you reach the next save point you will trigger a CS in which Fang tells you about what it was like when she was young... Yeah... Van adds a bit to it and the CS ends - and look! We are standing right in front of the next stone! That worked out great!

- Stone Mission 06: No Place Like Home

After you kill the correct Maestro and get the Mission Complete Flag backtrack to the stone that we flagged mission 06 from and then drop down and fight the Nelapsi, then grab the Rhodochrosite from the Treasure Sphere, then head up the stairs to put the beatdown on a pair of Taxim and a Nelapsi. Fight another pair of Taxim and Nelpasi and then hit the nearby Treasure Sphere, before you have an epic battle with four Taxim!

Okay, maybe it was not an epic battle, but still...

After the battle hit the Treasure Sphere in the corner for the Whistlwind Scarf, and then head back to the center of the area on the right between the columns to the stone there and flag Mission 07!

- Stone Mission 07: Bituitus, the Pillager

Once you finish Mission 07 backtrack to the nearby save point and save, and then use the stone from Mission 06 to teleport to the Tsubaddran Highlands - wasn't that convenient?

Now go through the canyon that we originally entered this area through - as we are backtracking towards the final Mission in the canyons, and that requires us to head back! When you reach the end of this section you will hit a jump point and then zone, and arrive back in the Fingers of Stone.

If you look at the map, way ahead almost to where we zone out of this section there is a shallow off-shoot with a save point marker in it - that is where we are headed! Just where the split is for the alcove you will see the next stone - marked on your map as a yellow dot - for Mission 08.

- Stone Mission 08: The Eleventh Hour

Now that you have completed the final Mission for the canyon area we can head back to the main part of the zone - but before we do that, run along the bank of the stream here to empty the Treasure Sphere of its Rune Bracelet first.

Now head back in the direction of the stone from the last mission, and bear left as you approach it, follow the path and zone out!

11C: A Man's Hope is His Castle Part II

Stone Mission 09

As you exit the canyon entrance in to the main area of the zone turn left and use the save point here, and then check the map for the yellow dot that represents the Cie'th Stone for the next mission - it is right next to the cliff wall a little ways away.

When you reach the stone click on it to trigger the next mission:

Stone Mission 09: Heave-Ho

Run back towards the direction that we came from keeping to the left - if you look on the map there are two island-like shapes and the next stone is at the one on your left - you can see its marker on the map. Run up to it and flag the mission now!

Stone Mission 10: Hollow Hope

Hit the save point on the way out, and then head East and a little Southeast all the way to the other side of the zone where you will find the next Stone on the edge of the cliff top with more than a few big nasty mobs nearby.

Stone Mission 11: Pride Before a Fall.

Our next stone is to the North a little ways into the canyon entrance for the canyon that is not the one that took us into the canyon zones (if that makes sense?) which is nearby. So head into it and you will find the stone near the first significant bend in the canyon on the left side.

Clicking the stone here triggers the mini-tutorial on Cie'th Paines - which are Cie'th Stones that block paths or roads; in order to "clear" them you need to complete the mission associated with that stone, after which the route behind it is then opened to you. The tutorial warns you that the marks (mobs) associated with these particular stones are somewhat tougher and more challenging than the average mobs associated with stones, but hey, that does not scare us!

Stone Mission 12: Geiseric, the Profane

What an easy fight this one turned out to be! After eviscerating Geiseric we got a nice CS of his dying in one moaning slamming ker-pow with some nice fireworks at the end. The next stone is back in the direction that we came from for the previous one - in fact it is located on the edge of the island Stone 12 is behind - so we may as well run over there and flag the next mission now, right? Right!

Stone Mission 13: Eternity Unpromised

The next mission is not too far away - it is tucked up into the bottom of the island that is sort of shaped like Australia - and this is also a special mission as it unlocks access to chocobo! So head for the nearby save point and use it, and then head for the stone.

Stone Mission 14: Defender of the Flock

After the mission completion screen fades we get a very brief CS of Sazh's pet choco and then a mini-tutorial on chocobos. The tutorial explains briefly what the yellow jump points are for (but we already knew that), and then tells you how to mount a choco, and what happens to the choco when you get into combat while mounted on it, which is not really a great idea anyway. Ideally you ride chocobos, they are not really suited as a combat mount, so that should be avoided.

The next part of the tutorial touches upon treasure hunting with your chocobo - one of the more useful skills it presents. The method for detecting treasure, closing in on it, and finally digging it up are explained - obviously you should read this tutorial!

As we are here - and there are choco here - we may as well mount one so that we get our first experience of riding one in a non-dangerous environment, right? Once you have mounted the choco why don't you head over to the nearby Treasure Sphere and grab the Seapetal Scales from it?

Go ahead and dismount now and hit the save point. If you want you can also take out the rest of the bad mobs in the area - there is no reason not to and you get some CP and maybe some spoils as well, so it is worth it! There is a Water Charm in a nearby Treasure Sphere here,

11D: A Man's Hope is His Castle Part III

Stone Mission 15

Jump on a chocobo and head out of the clearing and through the canyon to the main area, skirting the mobs that you encounter. Once you are out of the canyon head for the lake and use the chocobo jump spot to get to the small island, and grab the pair of Minar Stones from the Treasure Sphere here, and then ride to the smaller of the two bluffs to the North and use the chocobo jump spot to get on top, hopping across to the Cie'th Stone there to flag Stone Mission 15.

Stone Mission 15: Tribal Warfare

The next Stone is directly to the South of where we are now, but that requires us to loop around the edge of the cliff and the nearby bluff - so do that, working your way down to the level below and, once you head around the edge of the bluff, use the save point there. Work your way around the back of the bluff past the walker, then jump up on to the bluff near the second walker, and head to the Cie'th Stone here.

Although there is a choco jump point here you do not actually need one to get up, as you can climb up to the left of the spot - and finding a choco here would be difficult. The stone is in the XXX corner of the lower plateau of this bluff. Click the stone to flag Mission 16.

Stone Mission 16: Surrogate Slayer

Grab a chocobo and exit to the main part of the zone, then head towards the North - this is a long run to the upper left corner of the zone. Remember that slope that lead down we used on a previous mission? That is where we are going.

You will have no trouble getting past the two large mobs fighting each other at the entrance to the sloping path, so scoot past them and click the stone mate! If you had a similar experience to mine you probably managed to dig two or three treasures up along the way - choco digging is a convenient way to make Gil now that we have access to the birds and they are situated around the zone.

Stone Mission 17: A Widow's Wrath

With that mechanical menace out of the picture, we now want to turn around and head directly back to the stone we got this mission from - hit the save point here and then head down the path past the two battling mobs and when you reach the area where the stone is, head left and hit the zone point, where you get a brief CS of Snow pointing out that there is a path through the cliffs here.

Follow the path in a northerly direction until you zone again, and reach another save point - you may as well use that now. If you check the map, up ahead in an area still hidden by the fog of war you can see the marker for the next Cie'th Stone. That is where we are headed!

Ahead of you is a group of Hoplite - take them out and then hit the Treasure Sphere with a Hauteclaire (one of Lightnings weapons) which you should grab - then tackle the next group of Hoplites. After the third group is down, head into the passage ahead and run past the branching path on the left to the end, where you bear around to the right, where you encounter a Boxed Phalanx and some more Hoplites.

This is an odd fight - if you go after the Hoplites first thinking to think out the crowd that would be a mistake, because the Phalanx will simply re-spawn more and it will turn into a never-ending fight. So target the Phalanx first, and then the Hoplites.

Moving forward after the fight triggers a CS and then continue on, taking out the nearby bombs, and follow the path, killing your way along until you reach the bridge - where you spot a new Fal'Cie in an interesting CS. The stone that

we are seeking is just ahead and on the left - so move up and take out the mobs ahead, then tag the stone.

Stone Mission 18: So Close, Yet So Far

Once you have the mission complete continue off of the bridge and follow the path to the first bend, where you will find a Treasure Sphere with a pair of Saint's Amulets in it. On the other side of the bend is a jump point, then the cavern opens up and you exit near a convenient save point. Once you have saved your game, and then move forward to trigger the next CS.

11E: Helping Hands

Stone Mission 19

Van and Fang have a chat in which Fang says that she remembers everything that happened, and Van starts to behave oddly - you know what this means right? Eidolon Fight!

As the fight is about to commence Fang tricks Van into admitting that she has been hiding the truth from her - and Fang is not happy. Before they can explore that any deeper however there is the matter of Vanille's Eidolon - so let us get that fight behind us, shall we?

Some of my mates said this was a difficult battle for them - I did not find it to be that. In fact all that you need to do to win this easily is to switch to the Stumbling Block deck, and then simply attack. If all goes well you will not be switching out of this deck unless he gets lucky and does some serious hurt to you.

The fight will go like this - you attack, then use a potion, then attack. If you get badly hurt (ie in the yellow) switch it to attack then use TWO potions - then attack, rinse and repeat.

There is enough time in the charge up for your attack to use two potions and still make your next attack on time. This is, using this tactic, an easy victory. Just wait until the meter fills and then trigger the Eidolon's Gestalt to win! Good on ya mate! Well done! Van picks up another ATB segment and you now have all of the Eidolon in your stable!

Fang and Van have the chat that they need to have, and then we cut back to the party and basically fight your way along the path until you reach the next save point - which you should use! Now the path ahead to the left is where we want to go, so fight your way across the bridge.

On the right once you cross is a Treasure Sphere with 3 Crystal Oscillators in it. Grab those and then fight your way down the stairs and grab another Treasure Sphere with 3 Perfect Conductors - this stuff will come in handy for upgrades...

When you reach the marker it appears to be a dead-end - but there is an examine point, which you should examine, and that earns you an exciting CS. Go down the stairs here and get on the Atmos and after a brief ride it drops us off at our destination! Whew!

As you can see there is a nearby save point - use that - and the next Stone in our mission path. After you save head over to the Cie'th Stone to flag Mission 19!

Stone Mission 19: Triangle of Tragedy

Before you start to backtrack after completing the mission, grab the 5 Seapetal Scales from the Treasure Sphere. On the way back I noticed a Sphere I did not see when we came here - and grabbed the Aquabane Brooch from it.

11F: Speaking with Serah

Stone Mission 20

Cross back to the main path and continue on it to the next Treasure Sphere, which contains 7 Abyssal Scales, then continue on to the next CS in which Lighting talks to her sister and they decide to stop and camp there for the night.

After the CS ends follow the path and you will encounter another Treasure Sphere that contains a Cie'th Tear - grab that and then head around the corner to zone, and hit the save point here. Run through the next small section and you trigger a CS with an amazing view, and on the other side of the CS we find ourselves standing beside the next Stone in the series!

Stone Mission 20: Words Unspoken

After the battle, hit the Treasure Sphere that is to the left of where you fought the battle and rejoice in your 20 Sinister Fangs! The next Mission Stone is inside that round tower-like chamber to the left, so go ahead and follow the path in that direction, entering the building at the end of the path.

Once you pass through the first hall you get a CS of entering the Tower - which is where we want to be - I don't know about you but the CS was sort of cool...

If you look around this area before you get into that contraption you will notice some mobs to kill, a Treasure Sphere with 4700 Gil, and another with some Chipped Fangs in it. That wraps up the assets for this area, so go ahead and hit the save point that is right beside the entrance to the contraption - and then climb on board the contraption and use the control panel to reach the Second Tier. Run around the path to the middle platform area - that is where our next stone is!

As you step forward you will trigger a CS in which you have a sort of confrontation with the Fal'Cie that we saw earlier, and then we get a mini-tutorial on The Menhirrim - explaining that we need to do missions for the Menhirrim on this level before we can continue on along the path. Is this helpful or what? Excellent!

Go through the blown-open wall and you will see a large stone statue with a red swirl in front of it - presumably this is the Menhirrim. Go ahead and examine it, flagging Stone Mission 21!

Stone Mission 21: A Tremulous Terror

Now walk over to the statue here - look for the red swirl - and examine it to flag Stone Mission 22.

Stone Mission 22: Infernal Machine

The next statue is naturally on this platform, and as there are no Treasure Spheres or mobs for us to kill here we may as well go right to it!

Stone Mission 23: Natural Defenses

With the final glowing sword the statues change position and the flames on the main path extinguish, leaving us a clear path to proceed along the narrow balcony running along the inside of the tower. As we pass through the hole in the wall we get a CS in which the statues do battle with the Fal'Cie and then disappear.

If you follow the balcony all the way around you arrive at a Treasure Sphere with 5 Spark Plugs, which you should grab. Now backtrack to the entrance to the stairwell on the right, and fight the mobs here before continuing up the nearby stairs, stopping to grab the Simurgh from the Treasure Sphere on the landing.

At the top of the stairs is a pair of Managarmr to fight, and then enter the next chamber and fight the Pulsework

Galdiators.

You are now on the third tier of the tower - and at a dead end. Or are you? Walk to the statue and examine it, and get a CS in which you see the changes to the tower configuration, and then receive the notice that the elevator can now reach the fourth tier of the tower.

Exit onto the balcony outside and head immediately right to the Treasure Sphere and grab its 2 Metal Armbands, then head to the other side and up to the top of the ramp, where you trip a sensor that calls the elevator to you. Using the controls inside go to the fourth tier and exit, then use the save point to save your game.

At the end of the balcony is a Treasure Sphere with 2 Glass Orbs, and inside the next chamber a pair of Yakshe for you to kill. After you do that, head up the ramp to the elevator here and use the controls to go to the fifth tier of the tower inside the chamber with our next Stone Mission.

Fight the mobs here and then get the Ancient Bones from the Sphere in the back of the chamber, then take out the trio of mobs at the other end of the chamber. Now move to the statue and examine it for the next mission.

Stone Mission 24: A Potent Sting

Use the elevator to return to the fourth tier and exit onto the balcony. Run to the elevator and out the other side, stopping to grab the Gale Ring from the Treasure Sphere before entering the next chamber and the pair of Varc's here. At the far end of the chamber is a Treasure Sphere with 2 Rainbow Anklets - this is really been a treasure-rich area! Once you have those, hit the elevator ramp and use the controls to go to the sixth tier.

Exit the elevator and run around to the back and use the save point, and then examine the statue to flag the next mission.

Stone Mission 25: Spectral Haunt

After the fight grab the Librascope from the nearby Sphere, then head along the corridor and examine the statue in the next chamber.

Stone Mission 26: So Shrill, The Cry

Completing this mission causes a pair of the statues to change their pose and then we are back in control of our party. Work your way to the third chamber and use the stairs to go down to the level below, then down the corridor and out on to the balcony, turning to the right. At this point you will trigger a CS in which the Fal'Cie returns - and the statues fight it again.

The statue point she way for you to go, and then disappears - and your party heads off in the direction of the new path. At the end of the balcony there is a statue - examine it to reconfigure the tower again, and get the notice that the elevator can now reach the sixth tier.

Turn around and head to the entrance to the chamber (first door on the left) and go inside to the elevator there, and use it to go to fourth tier, and then go to the central elevator and take it to the sixth tier, which now gives you access to the side of the balcony you could not reach before!

Follow Hope out of the elevator and fight the Vampire at the entrance to the first chamber. Hope runs inside the chamber and you fight another Vampire, After the fight grab the 8 Tears of Remorse from the Sphere inside the chamber, then grab the Clay Ring in the Sphere at the other end of the chamber. Now head into the next chamber and take out the trio of Vampires before using the elevator to go to the Apex Level of the tower.

11G: Dust to Dust

Stone Mission 27

Exit the elevator and use the save point, then run counter-clockwise around the ring and grab the Ethersole from the Sphere by the jump point, and then run to the center of the zone to use a lift that will raise you up - and trigger a CS in which you confront the Fal'Cie. Hope wants to take it on and kill it!

The easiest method for doing that is to stagger it quickly with Tri-Disaster, then damage it using Relentless Assault. When you are damaged switch to Solidarity - then rinse and repeat with this combination. You should easily terminate this troublesome Fal'Cie, and then get the CS that follows.

Now head over to the Cie'th stone that is near the inner ring of the platform and flag the next mission.

Stone Mission 27: Mithridates, the Lone

We get a nice cinematic CS of the old boy dying - which is nice - and then we should hit the nearby save point and then jump on the lift and head back to the Apex Tier. Once there, run to the wing that juts out from the ring and use the jump spot to get on to it, then head to the end and enter the elevator there - This will take us to the next area - a snow swept mountain pass.

Follow the very long path to the bridge and fight your way across, heading down the partial street on the left - where you will find a Treasure Sphere with a nugget of Perovskite which you should grab. Now continue to fight your way to the end of the street where a shallow branch goes to the left, in which you will find the next mission stone!

Note: The mission below also contains the details of the robot side-mission that, while unconnected, is initiated during this mission. The details are duplicated below in case you are not following this walkthrough with respect to the missions.

Stone Mission 28: Faded Glory

--- The Repairing Bhakti Side-Mission Info ---

If you are not following the Stone Missions as part of the walkthrough, you need to know to:

Head down the sloping street to trigger a CS - then continue along the path and you will come to a building - enter and go up the stairs and you will find some burlap sacks that you can examine - do that to learn that they are stuffed with tools and some other details. There are other things you can examine here - do that until you get a CS of Van being reunited with her robot.

Sazh declares that he can fix this robot - and that triggers the details for the side-mission 'Repairing Bhakti' that instructs you to locate the 5 parts needed to repair him that are all located here in the village. Excellent!

There is a Treasure Sphere here with a Heavenly Axis in it - grab that and continue on the path, where you will find a mob near the jump points that you want to kill to obtain the first of the 5 parts for the robot side-mission. You should get the Trochoid Gear from this mob...

--- End of Robot Notes ---

Right, so we have one of the five parts, and we have finished the Stone Mission 28.

Continue along the path here to fight a Vampire and 3 Seekers, then head into the building on the right and fight the Vetala and Chons. After you defeat them examine the workbench to obtain the Aspheric Lens, which is the second part of five that we need! Go up to the roof and grab the Pleiades Hi-Powers from one of the Treasure Spheres here, and a Moogle Puppet from the other, and then head back down to the street.

Head up the long flight of stairs to the street above and use the save point, and then enter the building here and fight the trio of Taxim. Continue up the stairs and on to the roof, cross over to the next area and grab the Flamebane Brooch from the Treasure Sphere here. In the center of this area is a red swirl - examine it to obtain the Metal Plate (the 3rd part for the Robot Quest).

Head along the tracks and grab the Taming Pole from the Treasure Sphere here, and then backtrack to the building we flagged the robot quest in and head past it to the tank-shaped building on the right. Go in and grab the battery pack that is inside, and then exit the building and go to the cart beside the wind turbine outside and get the power cable, which is the 5th and final item for this quest.

In addition to the quest there is a Trophy/Achievement associated with this quest - Pulsian Pioneer - that involves having walked 10,000 steps on the lower surface. If you talk to the robot and you unlock it that means you have walked 10,000 or more steps - if not, then not. If you do not unlock it, you can try again later - it does not have to happen when you turn in this quest.

Now that we have all 5 pieces let's go see the robot, shall we?

When you return and click on the robot Sazh will fix it and it will roll away - walk up to it and click it again now that it is fixed and, if you have walked 10,000 steps (and really you should have as it counts all of the steps since we arrived in Gran Pulse) it will unlock the Pulsian Pioneer Trophy/Achievement and reward you with 10 Vials of Deseptisol, 2 Ultracompact Reactors, a Gold Nugget, 5 Vials of Perfume, and 3 Platinum Ingots. Whew!

11H: Their Own Worst Enemy Part I

Stone Mission 29

Now work your way back to the train tracks and follow the path ahead past the barricade and fight your way along the tracks to the first save point, grabbing the Vial of Ethersole from the Sphere before saving. Just past the save point you trigger a CS in which Serah appears to... well... appear. Of course it is not really Serah, but you did not think that it was, did you?

A bit more of the story is now revealed, including the back-story on the big guys plans to take out Cocoon. It is nice of him to let us know what the plan is - but you knew we were going to have to fight him, right?

This battle - which takes about 20 minutes - is one of the sort that you are just happy to have done and over when it is done and over. That is really all that I can say about it! Well... I could also talk about the 100,000 CP you get for beating him... And the Crystarium Expansion that you also get for heating him...

So you defeat him and then bam! He is back, unharmed, unbeaten, and now he shows us Ragnarök! Did that make any sense?

Ahead of you is a Cie'th Stone - when you touch it you get a CS in which Van and Fang speculate on the stone - and then Van touches it and you are treated to a propaganda show. Well, at least Sazh is no longer the cup-half-full guy!

Here is where we come to a part you are probably not going to like - yes the zone point that moves us on to the next area is at the end of the tracks - but we still have a little over half of the Stone Missions to complete! So turn around and head back to the elevator that we used to get here and, using that, return to the tower.

Once you arrive use the central lift to return to the Ground Tier, and then exit to the outside, run around the bend and through the large open area ahead, around another bend into a smaller open area, and use the Cie'th Stone located here to teleport. The stone you are at is the Taejin Towers and the destination you want to pick is Mah'habara Twilit Cavern.

Once there head West-Northwest and follow the path until a longish right-hand branch and enter that - at the end is a CS in which you are introduced to a rather disturbing Juggernaut - who you have to kill! I am pretty sure this is a boss fight but what I don't get is - why here? I know that with a lot of the heavy mobs using your decks strategically is usually the way to go, but honestly I found that the best approach with him was to simple stay in Relentless Assault, the whole time, switching to Combat Clinic as needed to heal and then switching back.

After that you can access the next Cie'th Stone and a Treasure Sphere with a Platinum Bangle!

Stone Mission 29: Faltering Faith

Head back to the stone and teleport to the Archylte Steppe Northern Highplane stone, running up the path to the save point and saving. Now mount the nearby chocobo - you cannot proceed to where we are going without a choco so do not get dismounted, okay?

Head all the way east to the other side of the zone digging treasures when you encounter them, and once you reach the other side, and then head a little north and east to the canyon entrance - if you have trouble spotting this, look at the point on the map that sort of looks like one of the Pacman Ghosts - and follow the line from its left foot. Using your chocobo jump up on to the ledge leading into the canyon (you cannot reach this without a choco).

There is a Treasure Sphere here with 7 Diabolic Tails - grab those and then head into the canyon, and use the save point just inside the first open area. We actually want to head towards the second open area so spot the canyon leading to that and follow it. There are plant mobs just outside the entrance to the canyon - if you ride straight in and quick enough, you will avoid having to fight them and thus being dismounted.

Just before the opening to the second area you will find a save point, and then the Cie'th Stone that we are seeking. Use both!

Stone Mission 30: Syphax, the Insidious

Although this fight is fairly long it is easy to 5-star. Grab the 4 Perfect Conductors from the first Sphere, and the 2 Particle Accelerators from the second.

Once it is finished you will want to backtrack to where we flagged this last mission - which means getting a chocobo to access the area. The barrier is now down,

Once you reach the spot where the barrier was you get a CS. The Cie'th stone is near the entrance to the next canyon on the other side, so head there now.

Stone Mission 31: Newfound Purpose

Run back to the stone - now that we have completed this mission it converts to a teleport stone - use that to go to the Vallis Media Base Camp, and follow the North path to the next stone mid-way along.

Stone Mission 32: And Then There Was One

Either run to the Haerii Archaeopolis in the Steppe or teleport to the stone there - actually teleporting would probably be quickest. The next mission stone is the square shaped spot directly below where we teleported in. Kill the group of Goblin here and then hit the stone!

Stone Mission 33: A Parent's Pledge

Head for your nearest teleport point and return to Haerii. The next Cie'th Stone is above where we teleport in, so jump on the fallen pillar and head up there to hit the stone!

Stone Mission 34: Zenobia, the Butcher

11: Titan's Trial

Stone Mission 35

The Titan's Trial is a series of back-to-back Stone Missions that all take place inside the Faultwarrens - access to which you just unlocked by completing Mission 34 which caused the barrier to drop past the Cie'th Stone.

This is going to be a long series of challenges and fights - and we will follow the same structure as we have been using above - with the mission details being listed on a mission-by-mission basis in the Appendix. So, to complete these missions, go get a soda, or maybe some tea, and get comfortable, and we will get these all done in one go, shall we?

To start this jump up to the canyon where the last stone was and follow it past the now dropped barrier - keep going until you zone into the new area of the Faultwarrens. Ahead is a save point - use that - and then follow the path to trigger a CS in which you encounter a talking construct that does not think much of you.

Once the being (the Titan) stops talking you get the mini-tutorial for the Titan's Trials. The instructions are simple - you will fight a series of battles for each section and your opponents are a lot tougher than those you have been facing in the past. Succeed and you are offered more opponents until you finish that section of the challenges. To return to the start simply touch a golden Cie'th Stone. You have all that down, right?

Now that you have read the tut and finished the CS you are back in the Warren, and here you will find the next Cie'th Stone - so if you are ready, touch that puppy and let us get the show on the road!

Actually, before you do that, have you upgraded all of your kit? If you have not - and if you have some CP to spend, it would be an idea to get yourself capped and your kit upgraded prior to starting this set of trials - the more advantage you can give yourself the better!

Stone Mission 35: The Road Less Traveled

Backtrack to the main path and keep going along what was the left branch, and you will find the Cie'th stone for the next mission.

Stone Mission 36: Dark Deliverance

Now here is the thing - these missions are a branching path - so having completed 36 our next options are 38 and 39 since we chose 36 and not 37... We could simply continue on and not follow them in numerical order - which is one choice - or we can re-fight 35 to gain access to 37. What I am going to do is slightly a different approach - I will do these missions in logical rather than in numerical order. Once I complete one path, I will return to the start and complete the other, thus filling them in while still making logical progress.

You do not have to follow this approach if you do not want to - the reason I am doing it that way is because I need to get them all documented. You can jump to the mission you choose and progress that way, or you can follow the path the way I am doing it. Considering that we need to complete all of them anyway, you may want to do it the way I am even though it will mean a lot of extra fighting.

Stone Mission 38: Moonlit Madness

Head along the path and take the second left, for Mission 41.

Stone Mission 41: Galan Grudge

Just past the battle spot is the next stone so go ahead and trigger it!

Stone Mission 45: Emergent Evolution

The fight wraps up, you get a bit of a flash from the big guy, and then you are teleported out. You then receive notice that a new trial now awaits you - and you are shown the list of the trials that indicate which you have already completed. In this case that should be A1, B1, C1, D1, and E1!

Now we continue our quest to catch 'em all - err, woops, wrong game - I mean we now want to complete the other missions in the chart, so head to the stone to repeat Mission 35, finish off the mob and get rewarded with some Bomb Shells, and then use the nearby stone to trigger Mission 37.

Stone Mission 37: Dying of the Light

Head to the left branch and flag the next mission now.

Stone Mission 39: Seeing Stars

The next stone is directly ahead of us - so go ahead and flag that now!

Stone Mission 42: Antihero

Turn around and backtrack, taking the right hand path at the branch and head to the end where the next stone is located - and flag it.

Stone Mission 46: On Silent Wings

The last mission in this string is Stone Mission 47: Unfocused Rage - but you are not going to be able to do this one until after we finish the story mode and unlock the 10th level of the Crystarium I am afraid to say. You can try if you like, but I promise you it will be mostly frustration and death, and no victory. There are a few of these we are going to have to come back to after completing the story mode - so for now we concentrate on doing the ones that we can do.

You may be wondering why we do not just go and complete the story mode and then come back to do them all in one go - the answer is simple enough - we can do most of these missions now, and by doing that we remove the need to grind levels once we complete the story mode in order to do the final missions in the strings right away.

Now do Mission 35 and Mission 37 again, and then select Mission 40 so we can start the bottom strings of the set!

Stone Mission 40: Solar Power

Continue along the path, take the left-side branch and flag the next mission there.

Stone Mission 43: The Hero Never Dies

Turn around and backtrack to the first alcove to trigger the next mission.

Stone mission 48: The Abyss Stares Back

After that quick fight you should be raring to go! Head over to the stone, repeat missions 35, 37, 40 and 43, then tag the next mission:

Stone Mission 49: Tyrannicide

Right, now that you have completed another of the strings, re-do missions 35, 37, 40, and then select the next mission!

Stone Mission 44: The Old Ones Go To Rust

Head down the left branch to flag the next mission.

Stone Mission 50: Road to Perdition

This completes the Titan's Challenge Missions (for now). You still need to complete the last of the strings (Mission 47) and then the final mission for this set, Mission 51, but we cannot do those until we complete the story mode, unlock the 10th Level of the Crystarium, and return. So for now we should return to the Steppe and continue the rest of the Stone Missions there!

11J: Their Own Worst Enemy Part II

Stone Mission 52

From the cliffs turn around and follow the path back until you reach the save point on the right - and use it. Continue along the path to the zone point, jump down on the other side and use the Stone to teleport to the Archylte Steppe Northern Highplain.

Pull up the map - where we want to go is straight up on the map to the small carved out area above - basically South and a little West as you run. Use the stone here to begin the next mission.

Stone Mission 52: Head in the Clouds

Use the nearest teleport stone to go to the Mah'habara, take the South tunnel and follow it to the end sticking to the left. Fight your way in and flag the next mission to progress.

Stone Mission 53: Freedom from Fear

Head back to the teleport stone and jet over to the Northern Highplain in the Steppe. The next stone is located very close to where we are - run up the path and use the save point and then head to the right - you should see the stone from here.

Stone Mission 54: The Bigger They Are

That was some fight, right? I chose to rely on luck for that one because I wanted it done, and even though Lightning's Hauteclaire was still just Level 1 (I did not remember to upgrade it when I was near the save point) I was still able to kill the mark in one go once the instant stagger kicked in. A most excellent outcome to an otherwise frustrating battle!

Don't forget to return your party member's weapons and kit to the regular set - optimizing works good - after this battle, since the configuration that I recommend is pretty much exclusive to this battle and you will not want them fighting the other missions with that configuration!

Now to continue, head to the nearest teleport stone and select 'Oerba - Village Proper' and, once you are there, follow the path down the slopes into the village until you reach the building on the wharf - enter the building and head upstairs to its roof, fighting mobs as needed, where you will find the next stone!

Stone Mission 55: Can't We All Just Get Along?

After you complete this one, you should seriously equip the Growth Egg on one of your party - it gives you double-CP for all of the CP you earn from here on out, which can only be a good thing!

Our next mission is back in the main Steppe area - so head back to the teleport stone and return to the Steppe - then head for the stone which is located to the east - you are heading for the ring of stones near the cliff - that is where our stone is.

When you get there you want the stone that is between 7 and 8 o'clock when you are facing the cliff.

Stone Mission 56: A Toothy Grin

Return to the Steppe and to the stone ring, and select the next mission!

Stone Mission 57: What's Yours is Brine

After you exit the mission screens you unlock the Trophy/Achievement 'Xezat's Chalice' (worth the usual 15 GP). Head for the teleport stone and then return to the ring and select the next mission stone!

Stone Mission 58: The Culler of Many

Backtrack to the teleport stone and return to the Steppe, use the nearby save point and then grab the choco and ride to the ring, where you can select the next mission.

Stone Mission 59: Two-faced Fiend

Return to the teleport stone and teleport to the Steppe, then use the nearby save point before mounting a chocobo and riding back to the stone circle. Once you reach the circle, select the next mission!

Stone Mission 60: Degela Vu

After you complete the mission, head back to the teleport stone - you will probably have to fight a few mob groups on the way out just as you had to on the way in, and if you are following this walkthrough you, like me, have discovered that there is a cap on your CP bank! I think that is a terrible oversight on the part of the programmers. A cap of 999,999 CP is bunk! Obviously you cannot use the banked CP until you get the final Crystarium Stage upgrade - and that is not going to happen until we wrap up the last handful of Cie'th Stones, so you may as well un-equip the Egg for now, and replace it with something that adds to your stats or abilities, right?

So teleport to the Steppe, save, grab the nearby choco, and head for the stone ring. Once you get there, flag the next mission!

Stone Mission 61: I, Juggernaut

At this point we have pretty much done all of the Stone Missions that we can do without unlocking the final stage of the Crystarium. You could try to continue with these, but I doubt that what you experience will be even remotely pleasant and, based upon my own experiences, will be rather frustrating as well! So be happy that we have completed all but 6 Stone Missions and admit that it is now time to finish this story!

Head for the teleport stone and then to the Village of Oerba! Now follow the path to the tracks and follow those all the way to the end, where you will find the ship that you need to board to return to Cocoon!

You get a spectacular series of CS's and of course you unlock another Instrument Trophy/Achievement as this is the end of one chapter and the start of another - in this case you get 'Instrument of Faith' (worth 30 GP). You are promoted to save - do so.

12A: Start Your Engines

Behemoth King Battle

This chapter begins with another series of pretty cool CS's - actually a series of epic CS's is more on target :)

The CS ends with Lightning and Odin in a battle with a saw-bladed mech warrior - who you easily beat - and then you are treated to another series of CS's that show the Pulse invasion of Eden and the ripples caused by it. Cid gets assassinated, the team realizes what is happening, and then we are back in control. There is a save point nearby - use that.

Run along the path to the left so that you can get behind the orange lit thing in the center to grab the Lionheart from the first Treasure Sphere, then follow the path more to the left to trigger another CS in which you end up jumping to the ground.

You land safely and do some serious damage to the ground forces below, and then the CS ends and you are back in control of the team. Fight your way along the path until you trigger another CS, then continue along the path.

After you defeat the Bulworker activate the controls to enter the pods and you get another brief CS. After the CS you are in a fight with a Behemoth King - this one is a little tougher than the ones you faced previously. You get another CS after this fight, and then you proceed along the path some more, fighting your way through.

12B: Eden Under Siege

The Proudclad Boss Battle

Basically you are working your way along the path, winning a series of battles with a variety of mobs, stopping to grab the Rebel Heart from a Treasure Sphere in the middle of the road halfway along.

After the fight with the Proto-Behemoth grab the Otshirvani from the Treasure Sphere, then hit the nearby save point!

When you jump over the rubble you will see ahead of you a large mob - this is 'The Proudclad' and it is a boss mob so this is a boss fight! Stagger and beat it. You do not actually kill it - yet - but you should easily 5-star this battle before it flies away. We are treated to a brief CS after the battle in which we all get fired up on the fight to come, and then we are back in control of the team!

Jump across and enter the lift, using its controls to lower it. When you reach the bottom you will trigger another CS which you see the nearby battle between Cocoon forces and more of the Pulse Mech Units and monsters. Cocoon does not do so well - no surprise there - and then you are back in control of the team and facing one of the huge walkers from Pulse. Actually it is called an Adamanchelid but it reminds me of the walkers from one of the later Star Wars flicks.

Once you stagger the walker it is wicked easy to kill - it is getting it staggered that is the challenge, especially with the high damage that its special can do to your team. After a brief CS we are put back in control of the party in a nice cinematic panning view, and then we just need to continue along the path!

Use the nearby save point first - it would be a pity to have to re-do all of this, right?

Ahead on the right by the blue car is a Treasure Sphere with a Punisher in it - grab that before you continue along the path and start fighting again. The first fight is with some troops, the second with a Humbaba - both are easy and quick.

Jump down and continue along the lower path, follow that around and open the door ahead for another CS and zone, then run ahead and on the right to the save point and use it. The path continues to the right of the save point, so follow that until you come to a split in the path. Basically the right split gives you some more mobs to kill but you end up following the same path in the end so it is your call. I chose to clear out the area to the right before continuing on.

Note that in addition to more mobs to kill, in the area to the right branch there is a Treasure Sphere with 2 Blaze Rings, a Tyrant to fight, and on the inner ring of the left hand circle is a Treasure Sphere with a Champion's Badge in it. Finally on the outer path on the lower left just past the hook-like switchback is another Treasure Sphere, this one containing a Librascope.

While the last Sphere is not really important the previous two are, especially if you are intent upon getting all - or nearly all - of the Trophy/Achievement unlocks in the game.

You are no doubt thinking that there is an awful lot of fighting in what is supposed to be one of the shorter chapters of the game - and yes, that is true. That is especially annoying if you have already capped your CP bank - as the only thing that we gain from these fights is spoils -and that being the case, if you have not remembered to arm the Collector's Catalog now would be a good time to remember that! You may also want to arm the Survivalist Catalog as well, as that will increase your chance of getting shrouds as loot.

Towards the end of this zone section is a Tyrant and a Vernal Harvester for you to fight - as long as you get the drop on them staggering and killing them is trivial. Just past that battle you hit a zone point and get a CS - and discover that your path is blocked!

Just when you think you are going to have to turn around and look for another route Snow's old group of rebels appear! The CS takes a more personal tone for Snow at this point. The crew from NORA heads off to do their bit, and you continue along doing yours, and all is right in the world!

Ahead of you is a save point - use that and then continue along the path to the path to the end of the curve where there is a Treasure Sphere with an Antares Deluxes (a set of weapons for Sazh).

12C: A Common Goal

A Humbaba Battle

Once you have those backtrack to the branch in the path near the save point and take it, after which you will fight a pair of Humbaba. What follows is a virtual gauntlet of harder to kill mobs as you fight your way to the stairs ahead, up them, and trigger the CS.

In the CS you see a crystal like substance raising from the ground and then you are paid a visit by the Fal'Cie who has been pushing you along your course the entire time. Mister Doom and Gloom restates his propaganda and you once again protest. Since we are seeing him, that should mean we are close to the end of the chapter, right? Right!

Off to the left side of the road is a save point - use that now.

As you run ahead it looks like there is no path in the center - but that is deceiving - the open area ahead with what looks like a long drop is actually a glass floor that you can cross - and on the other side are a pair of golden Treasure Spheres containing a Plush Chocobo (Right) and some Particle Accelerators (Left) - unfortunately you only have time to grab one because as soon as you empty one of the Spheres a walker comes and breaks the floor!

Fight your way forward along the path and open the door ahead at the top of the stairs for a CS and zone, and then we have yet another section of path to fight our way along! I don't know about you but this is getting old quick. I mean here they created this great game, with an amazing world, and yet they could not even be bothered to make the process more interesting or at the very least put in some sort of purpose for these fights. Weak man, this is a very weak story line here.

12D: Edenhall Grand Foyer

Final Proudclad Battle

Obviously use the save point ahead, and then head up the hallway here, passing the civilians who appear to be completely unaware of the epic battles you have been fighting just outside of the hall!

Ahead of you is a Treasure Sphere with a Mistiteinn Staff in it - grab that and then run forward and through the door to trigger another CS in which you see more of the floating crystals, and get a peak at the heart of Cocoon.

Clearly it would not be a normal day if we did not have a bunch of enemy to face - and look! A bunch of enemy! We now face a souped-up Juggernaut in what is clearly a battle that is intended to make this part of the chapter take longer. There is no plot element here - no reason for the fight or for it to be with a mob that takes a lot of killing - if it sounds like I am annoyed that is because I am!

Right so, fight your way along the path until you get to the next CS. After the CS use the save point here and then head up the stairs near the save point and grab the Power Glove from the Treasure Sphere there. Once you have that, turn around and head down the stairs and then - what else? Fight your way along the path!

Almost to the top of the stairs is a Treasure Sphere with some Ethersol in it, and just after that is a CS and the final boss and boss fight for the chapter. Remember the Proudclad that we defeated but did not kill? He's back!

Obviously this is a bossfight so it is supposed to be difficult but in this case? Not so much... In fact all that you have to do to win this handily is be patient and use your decks well! The pay-off is 100K CP that we cannot use, a new shop pass and a nice CS.

13A: The Cradle Will Fall Part I

Setting the Stage

Use the save point then take the lift ahead, and after the zone head up the stairs and forward to trigger another CS.

Some failed L'Cie show up - and then things go sideways. We are now in the Orphan's Cradle! How about that? Use the save point in front of you and then work your way over to the next platform to trigger another CS.

There are now teleport spots to the left and the right that allow you to return to Gran Pulse or Edenhall if there is still anything you have left unfinished or you want to return there. Remember that once you complete the story mode you still have full access to the world - we will be heading back to the Steppe to complete the Stone Missions after we complete story mode - so this is just an FYI and not a required backtrack.

During the CS you saw the statues moving and changing position - what we need to do is look at the map and see the marked spot behind us on the path that shoots off to the right. Head to there and touch the statue, which causes it to reconfigure the zone.

There is a Treasure Sphere with 20 Seaking's Beards on the moving platform that connects with the one you are now standing on so grab those, and then work your way along this platform to the other end, grabbing the Shamanic Spear from the Treasure Sphere there, hitting the save point, and then examining the statue there to once again re-structure the zone.

You will note that the path ahead splits in two directions - left and right - with the right-hand path extending away from the next marker on the screen. If you take the right hand path first and clear away the mobs there you will find a Tetradic Crown in the Treasure Sphere at the end of the walk. To get to this though, you are going to have to fight two fairly challenging groups - and keeping your team buffed is a real help in that process.

Once you have the crown head for the marker on the map to automatically reconfigure the zone, and then head down the ramp and hit the save point. At the far end of the section is another Treasure Sphere - this one has a half-dozen Starblossom Seeds in it. That prize may or may not be worth the difficulty presented by the two groups of mobs that stand between you and the Sphere - your call... I thought it was worth having myself.

If you went for the Sphere backtrack to the platform with the save point - use the save point - and then hop across to the other side to follow the left path up. If you did not go for the Sphere why then just hop across now.

Mid-way along the left path you will notice a small branching path to the lower left with a Treasure Sphere on it - this Sphere contains Black Mycelium - which according to its description is a fungus that is used for the flavoring of food. While I am not certain what that means in terms of its use for upgrading, the fact that I can add half-a-dozen little black mushrooms to my inventory for the simple effort of jumping down and taking it makes this a must-have item!

Back on the path now, continue along and face the Sanctum Templar and the Sacrifice - both of which you may need to add facts to in order to fully ID them. If that is the case, why not take this opportunity to do just that using Libra? I myself had already ID'd the Sacrifice fully prior to this through fighting them on the platform back when we first entered this zone - but YMMV.

Indecently if you are wandering whether or not you have fully ID'd a mob you are facing so that you do not use up resources unnecessarily, an easy way to check this is to simply hit the Right bumper, which will bring up your data file on the mob you have currently targeted. If there are any fields filled with "???" then you have not fully ID'd that particular mob type!

I know that we have covered this in the past but I want to emphasize that ID'ing mob types is not just a good idea, it is in fact a key factor in increasing your combat effectiveness against them. A side-effect (or benefit if you will) of

fully ID'ing a mob type is that you are now automagically aware of its weaknesses, which allows the AI to better address targeting and damage against them.

Now moving on - ahead and to the left is a branching platform that you can jump to that contains a Treasure Sphere that will yield a nice nugget of Rhodochrosite - a substance that is one of the dozen or so transformational catalysts in the game. This one in particular is a pink manganese carbonate crystal, that you will find particularly useful in upgrading accessories. It will soon become necessary to preform a number of upgrades - assuming that you are intent upon unlocking the Trophy/Achievement associated with that process, so stockpiling this type of resource is a given.

Head back to the main path and then jump to the right hand branch to continue towards the marker on the map, and we will face another Templar and a pair of Sacrifices. You should be able to get the jump on them, and if so it would be an idea to take out the Templar first, as that little bugger is where the debuffs are mostly coming from in this fight.

Once the battle is over head up the ramp and use the save point here, and then move to the statue, target it, and click it (Examine it). Be aware that doing this will teleport you to the next Boss Fight in the series!

13B: The Cradle Will Fall Part II

Frumious Bandersnatch Battle

-- Jabberwocky / Bandersnatch Boss Fight --

One of the more endearing parts of the Final Fantasy Series is its inclusion of beasts and figures from the worlds fable and fairy tales, and these mobs are just such a thing. While you may not know where they originated, certainly the names will be familiar to you!

The Bandersnatch is a fictional character that is mentioned in the the stories Jabberwocky and The Hunting of the Snark by Lewis Carroll. The word "bandersnatch" is intended as a portmanteau that describes the two natures of the beast - its fuming and furious nature. It may interest you to know that the word "Jabberwocky" does not (and never was intended to) represent a creature, dangerous or not, but is rather the name of the nonsense language invented by Carroll and used in many of his stories.

The stories were written in the 1870's, and have since served as influences, elements, and flavoring for a very large number of writers and stories. In the world of science fiction they are perhaps as influential and as often used as elements of the characters and stories of L. Frank Baum and Edgar Rice Burroughs - and certainly their use here is both appropriate and amusing.

Their normal attacks do considerable damage, while their special attacks have the capacity to kill a character outright if they are even just a little damaged, so you will not only want to keep a careful eye upon your health bars, you will also want to be certain that you maintain your buffs for this battle!

Of the pair the Jabberwocky seems to be the easier to stagger and kill, so I suggest going for it first. The Bandersnatch seems to have a much deeper HP pool and is a bit harder to stagger, so having the Jabberwocky out of the way when you settle down to taking out the Bandersnatch seems to make the most sense to me.

When you complete the battle you are teleported back to the previous zone. You will of course see the save point ahead, and want to use it, but as you approach it you trigger a CS - pay attention to what the party is saying, as it explains the motives of the Big Guy and how he is trying to manipulate you. Also note that Fang's tattoo appears to be more rapidly accelerating towards the end-point. That is not good news...

After the CS ends use the nearby save point and then take a look at the map - we want to head down the long path to the marker on the map now, as our arrival there triggers a CS in which the statues appear and re-structure the zone again, adding new elements to it.

Follow the left hand path around fighting your way to the other side, where you should use the save point prior to heading to the statue and examining it. That will teleport you to a new area in which you will fight Wladistaus - something of a tough fight...

Once you finish this fight hit the save point and then follow the path ahead to trigger a CS in which the zone is reconfigured. A ramp is added on the right - head up that and grab 3,000 Gil from the Treasure Sphere.

At the next landing there is a pair of mobs that will likely give you a run for your money. At the next landing up is another Sphere with 5,000 Gil, and then fight your way along. At the top you will face a trio of Templar - this can be a tough fight if you do not stay ahead of the debuffs - but once you finish it hit the save point.

Run ahead and examine the statue and you will be teleported and face the Tiamat Eliminator. There is really nothing that I can say about this battle - it is long and arduous and requires you to keep careful track of your health. I don't know how you felt about this fight but considering that it was a boss fight I was a little disappointed - it was a lot easier than I was expecting...

13C: The Cradle Will Fall Part III

The Final Barthandelus Battle

After the fight you teleport out and are back in the old zone. Run forward and warp out - you will get a brief CS and find yourself in the new area - use the save point ahead. You may want to hit the shops and re-supply now. At a minimum grab your shrouds from Eden Pharmaceuticals if you have any gaps...

This is the point of no return - you will be facing the Big Guy - Bart himself!

Run ahead and grab the Ethersol from the Sphere in the hall, and then continue forward to trigger the zone and a CS. Once you come out on the other side use whatever shrouds you plan to - and then step forward and trigger the CS - you get a nice view and then Bart drops in!

Just beat the crap out of him - you have fought him before - you know what to expect, and this really is a simple fight so do not over-think it. Stagger him and then pound the crap out of him, rinse and repeat until he is dead.

You will want to be wary of his special attacks - if you are damaged into the yellow the special attack can kill you - and it would suck to put in this much work only to die at the end of the fight, right?

As he dies you get a nice CS of him in throws of agony - a well deserved death if you ask me! After he sinks below the surface of the water the real final boss mob appears from the water - the Orphan!

-- The Orphan Fight --

First I want to warn you that you can, if you try, make this a very difficult and frustrating fight for yourself. I am in no way implying that anything I am about to say is true about YOU - but bear with me for a moment...

It is entirely possible that you have gotten through this entire game without really understanding how the buff and debuff system works. You could easily have muscled your way through the entire adventure that I chronicle here, ignoring it when I said to buff or debuff, and using shrouds alone to add buffs to your party. If that is the case, I am sorry for you, because this battle is really going to piss you off and cause you massive frustration. Assuming you continue to use the brute force tactic that is.

It is also possible that you used buffs and debuffs as I instructed, but still do not understand how and why they do what they do - and why they are often key to 5-starring a battle. If that is the case, well, no worries mate! You don't have to understand them as long as you USE them!

I say the above because - and this is heartfelt - if you try to use the default decks (Solidarity, Relentless Assault, and Protection) to get through this fight you will not only fail, but you will fail over and over again. You simply cannot do this battle in the usual stagger and pound fashion - and I will tell you why.

The Orphan has two nasty time-based special attacks, both of which will consistently bring your party to a fraction of HP away from death. What that means is that you will be constantly healing - and if Solidarity is the only healing option you enter the battle with, you will not be healing well. Even with Protection and using potions - EVEN if you have the accessory that doubles the effect of potions - you will still spend more time healing than you do fighting. In short, that tactic will not work for this fight. It will take a minimum of 35 minutes using the above approach - but do not worry, you will not last more than 22 minutes of that 35 minute estimate...

At 20 minutes or so the Orphan will cast Death - and you will die. Pretty simple, eh? If for whatever reason - luck for you, bad luck for him - you will still get hit with a countdown timer that will keep you from surpassing the 35 minute mark, and so you will die. Have I made it clear here that the usual tactics will not work here? Excellent! Now let me tell you what WILL work!

-- Team Configuration --

First you need to change your team to Lightning, Hope, and Fang. The reason that you want to do this is that those three have just the right combination of Level 4 jobs for this battle.

After you change the team, you need to edit your Paradigm Decks to include the following:

- (1) Bully - that is Commando/Synergist/Saboteur
- (2) Tri-Disaster - Ravager/Ravager/Raveger
- (3) Combat Clinic - Medic/Medic/Sentinel

When the battle starts Orphan will use a special attack that will take your entire party to within a fraction of an inch of their life. IMMEDIATELY change to Combat Clinic, use a potion, and heal. As soon as your party is healed up, change to the Bully deck and keep cycling until you see that the Orphan now has 4 red symbols (debuffs) on it. You do not need to know what they are, you just need to count until there are four.

Now change to Tri-disaster and Stagger him, then change to Relentless Assault and you will take him down to less than 50% HP. By now some of the debuffs have worn off - change to Bully and re-apply them, then rinse and repeat the above pattern and you will very quickly kill him!

The stats for my battle are:

Target Time: 00:07:49
Initiative Bonus: x1.0
Battle Duration: 00:04:28
Points Per Second: 21
Score: 14,221
Rating: 5-Stars

As you can see the above tactic and setup really does make a major difference!

After you defeat the Orphan the first time - yes, I did say the first time - you will get a lengthy CS in which some more of the plot comes together, and then Vanille or Fang (depending on I do not know what) will be tortured until the one not being tortured agrees to become Ragnarök. The CS progresses and you are finally thrust into battle again.

First of all - you did not see that coming did you? I know I did not. So was it an illusion or what? I am thinking that is what it was... I fully expected there to be a second knock-down drag-out fight with Orphan. You know? A dirty twice-as-hard as the first fight sort of battle? A battle worthy of the phrase Battle Royale?

At least we got to see the true face of the Orphan - and kill it!

If you have any trouble with this fight simply use Bully to debuff it, Tri-Disaster to stagger, and then Relentless to kill it. Voila! Dead Orphan II!

Your reward for this fight is the expansion of your Crystarium to Stage 10 (the final stage) and a nice CS of the witch dying! Lovely that!

13D: The New Dawn

The first thing you will note is the extended CS that happens after Lightning utters her famous line "We've come to save Cocoon, right?" This CS is a bit confusing, since it suggests that your party gets separated - and then we see the world sort of coming apart.... Yeah, a bit on the confusing side, but I guess this is supposed to represent the ending of the story mode. Have to remind myself that the end of the story mode has nothing to do with wrapping up the outstanding tasks.

So - first congratulations on completing the story mode! While the game is not finished with respect to all of the content, you have still reached a significant milestone - I hope you will not eject the disc and say "Well I am done with that!" No, don't do that because there is more to do still, starting with capping off our jobs and completing the Stone Missions! First though we need to sit through the final CS's and the credits.

Why should we sit through the credits you ask? Well, trust me when I say it is not so that you can see all the names of the people who made the game! No, the reason we should sit through them is because we have to in order to unlock the final story-mode Trophies/Achievements! Our survey says... Good reason!

The CS was full of happy endings - a most excellent finish for this long adventure! The crystal lattices seem to be coming apart - also excellent! The lengthy closing credits... Not so excellent, but you have to figure that the folks who made this should be able to ring their own bell, and besides, at least it is not like Batman: Arkham Asylum where they forced you to play thorough a long list of credits at the start and then again at the end!

Once the credits end you get the "The End" screen and the last Instrument Trophy/Achievement pops (for a whopping 95 GP)! You are prompted to save your game - and you should definitely do that. Next the game forces you to return to the main menu screen, so do that, and then hit Load Game and select the save that you just made, and you will be returned to the Edenhall!

Now would be a good time to use the CP that we have banked, right?

If you did this logically you should have capped off to level 5 one of each job in the party, unlocking the six Trophies/Achievements associated with that. Now it is time to backtrack to the teleport portals and return to Gran Pulse.

Once you are back in Gran Pulse find your favorite level grinding spot, equip the Egg and any Catalogs you think will be useful to you, throw on a CD, a movie, or an audio book, grab your favorite beverage and a snack, and start grinding CP! After you completely cap off all of the jobs on all of your party members, go to the next section!

13E: The Final Cie'th Stone Missions

We are now ready to complete the final missions! Those are Missions 47, 51, 61, 62, 63 and 64. In addition to getting some useful items that will help you 5-star any of the missions you did not manage to do that for previously, finishing these missions will also unlock several Trophies/Achievements. Once you have completed those, with the items secured there are some other Trophies/Achievements to unlock as well - but we will cover those at the end of this chapter!

So without further delay, let us head back to the stone for Mission 47 now!

Stone Mission 47:

Beating the mission unlocks Stone Mission 51, which is the last mission in the Titan's Trials series, so go ahead and head for that now. To get to it you will need to re-do Missions 35, and then any of the B and C missions to get to the D missions. It really does not matter what D mission you choose, the stone for Mission 51 appears in all of them.

Stone Mission 51: Attacus, the Soulless

I don't know about you but that was a tough fight and it took a long time - but patience and good technique won out in the end! Now is a good time to equip the glove on Fang (or whoever you are using as your DD/Tank).

Now it is time to head back to the Circle of Stones in the Steppe to flag the next mission!

Stone Mission 62: Indomitable Will

I cannot say that I ever want to do that fight again... Because I don't!

Right, so head for the teleport stone and select Sullya Springs, and when you arrive head along the path towards the South until you reach the next mission stone - in the area just past the right split.

Stone Mission 53: Crushed by Doubt

Nice and quick and no hoo-hoo! The final Cie'th Stone mission is flagged on a stone that is on the bridge on the other side of the railroad tracks past the Village of Oerba - so head to the teleport stone, save your game, and then go to Oerba.

Work your way through the village to the tracks and cross to the pier on the other side, where you will find the final Cie'th Stone!

Stone Mission 64: The Doomherald

After the mission ends you are returned to the ruins area, and the Trophies/Achievements "Exorcist" (worth 30 GP) and "Galuf's Grail" (also worth 30 GP) unlock! You can now continue to the next "Chapter" for the wrap-up!

13F: The Rest

You have now essentially completed the game. All that is left is a handful of Trophies/Achievements and a very long and tedious grinding session if you are intent upon completing them all. This is the point where I stopped playing... I am not a completion freak with respect to Trophies/Achievements, being one of those types that will unlock them if it is part of the process of playing the game, but who will not go out of their way to do so if it would require behavior that I am not likely to do...

Having said that, I will tell you what you need to do if you are the type that simply must complete the last few Trophies/Achievements!

L'Cie Paragon - 5-Star All Stone Missions

To unlock this one you will need to go back and 5-star any missions that you did not 5-star the first time through. To do that you will want to have the best kit that you can get, so you may want to work on the Treasure Hunter Trophy/Achievement first, as having the best kit in the game will make obtaining this one a lot easier.

Treasure Hunter - Hold all Weapons and Accessories

To complete this one you will need to do a LOT of grinding and Gil farming because you have a lot of Weapons to buy, and you will need resources to upgrade both the weapons and accessories. Consult the Appendix on this for more information and a general ticklist.

For weapons you will only need to upgrade all of them to Level 2, and then pick one for each character to take to Level 3. For accessories you have to pretty much upgrade them all.

Superstar - 6-Star the Last Battle

To unlock this one you need to 5-Star all three fights in the final battle of the story mode. That may seem like a hard challenge but remember you now have all of your jobs capped, and presumably you will have the best kit in the game, so you should not find it all that difficult!

You do not have to run all the way back to the end area - remember that teleport portal we used to get back here to do the Stone Missions? It is still there for you to use, so use it.

Xezat's Chalice - Complete all Mid-Level Stone Missions

This one is bugged! You either unlocked it or you did not - I did not. If you did not, chances are you will not, unless you are willing to play through the game again? Yeah, me either...

You can try re-fighting the missions that apply to this - those would be the Rank C missions, which are: #6-15, 18-22, 28, 35-37, 39, and 56-57. That might work, but I did not feel the need so strong that I tested it.

Adamant Will - Felled a Heavyweight

To get this all that you need to do is return to the stone ring in the Steppe and kill one of the walkers near it. Easy peasy lemon squeezy!

Well, that pretty much wraps this up. I hope that you found this walkthrough useful, and that you enjoyed FFXIII as much as I did! I'll see you in FFXIV!

Stone Mission Guide

Stone Missions make up a very large chunk of the second half of the game - the first half being Chapters 1 through 10, the second half being Chapters 11 through 13. Despite the fact that the first ten chapters are as a group fairly long they represent the first half of the game, with the last three chapters representing the full second half, not including the play that takes place after you complete the story mode - which is mostly mopping up any missed Stone Missions and grinding the CP you need to cap off all of the jobs in order to unlock the Achievements/Trophies that you have not gained to that point.

The missions are listed in numerical order below by number and name, and include any conditions required to unlock the mission, its difficulty level according to the game, and any rewards that are part of the mission or obtained as a result of doing the mission (ie spoils).

While the missions are listed here in numerical order, chances are you will not do them, strictly speaking, in the order that they are listed. This section is not intended to be used as a sequential walkthrough, but rather it is intended to be consulted from the regular subsections as you follow the walkthrough. As a result of this, each mission is written here as if it was part of the particular subsection that the mission applies to.

Missions marked with a '*' indicate that they feature key items as their rewards.

Stone Mission 01: Pond Scum

Unlock Condition: None

Difficulty: D

Reward: Energy Sash

After you read the mini-tutorial go ahead and touch the stone to get the mission - and it turns out that the Gelatinous Rube beside the nearby pond is what the Cie'th's Focus was - all that we need to do is slay the ectopudding and we will have completed its mission! Before we set off to kill the pudding hit the nearby save point (behind you).

There are a lot of monsters in this area and you are going to end up fighting more than a few - and they are stronger than the ones you fought in previous chapters even if they are the same type. Remember when I said earlier that you would be well-off capping your jobs in the previous chapter to prepare for this one? This is what I was talking about! If you did not grind these are going to be tough fights for you - though on the plus side you will gain CP from them, and eventually level up (grin). I think though that if you capped your jobs prior to this you are going to be a lot happier with the way the fights go now.

The nearby pond is obvious on the map, and as you approach it you will notice that there is another save point here, and on the small islands in the center there is a Treasure Sphere - that you cannot reach. There are yellow jump spot indicators but they will not work for you no matter what team member you have as the leader - the reason for that (if you missed the subtle hint in their description) is that these particular jump spots are for chocobo, not humans! You will have to return here once you have completed unlocking your chocobo to use these spots.

Ahead and to the left of the pond is an Ectopudding - go ahead and kill that now - and you get the Mission Completed flag! Good on ya mate! Notice that your rating on this is shown - the number of stars you earned - and bear in mind that you are going to want to 5-star all of these missions if you want to unlock the Achievement/Trophy associated with them. But you can re-do them, so you need not worry about that right now!

You get a brief CS of a stone flipping up and come out of the CS near the stone in question. Run over to examine that stone to trigger the next mission.

Stone Mission 02: Goodwill Hunting

Unlock Condition: Stone Mission 01

Difficulty: D

Reward: Cobaltite

For this mission you must kill the Uridimmu and some Gorgonopsids. Note that while you are moving about to do these missions it would be an idea to avoid battling the Adamanshelids (the very large walker type mobs) unless you like ten minute long battles of attrition.

There is a group of Rangda nearby guarding a Treasure Sphere with a Zephyr Ring in it - you may as well kill them and grab that now.

If you check the map you will see that the target is marked in a red dot near the right side of the larger canyon entrance. Both types of mobs are two different variations of the dog-like Gorg, and you will find them in one group by the marker with a smaller group of Gorg's sort of guarding them. You get the Mission Complete flag after wiping out the Urid group.

The stone for the next mission is right there, just past where the Urid group was located.

Stone Mission 03: Massif Contamination

Unlock Condition: Stone Mission 02

Difficulty: D

Reward: Platinum Bangle

The Ugallu at the Yaschas Massif is your target - check the map and you will see that its location is deep in the canyons beyond the bluff here. The thing is you cannot get there by going into the canyon whose entrance is right where you are. Instead you need to run along the bluff face to the entrance to the smaller canyon on this side of the zone. Once you reach that entrance go in, and follow the canyon.

The trip to the canyon entrance passes by lots of groups of mobs - if you are in a hurry you can ignore and/or run past them, if you are not - and I am not - you can stop and kill each group. Doing that will really help cut down on the dedicated grinding that you will be doing - remember every CP helps!

There is a save point just outside the entrance, so use that and then head on in, running forward until you hit the zone point. Continue forward and bear to the right - looks familiar right? We just zoned into the dead end from the canyon that we were grinding in prior to Hope's Eidolon fight! Anyway, continue along until you reach where Hope was laying and run past it until you are mid-way around the main bend past that point, to hit the next zone point.

This puts you inside the Yaschas Massif - if you are not in a hurry go ahead and read its entry in the Datalog (journal) under Locales. It is a brief read but it gives you a sense of the area, and besides you should always read the data that you are given as it really adds to the whole getting absorbed in the world thing that the Final Fantasy games are well known for!

If you look at the map now, you will see that the area ahead is mostly in shadow since we have never been here before. Ahead the canyon will open up and you can go left or right but the target we are heading for is directly ahead by the opposite wall so we will not be heading in either direction into the splits. There is a save point directly ahead that you may as well use. Saving when you can is a good idea in case you lose power or are subjected to one of the very rare bugs in the game...

Once you enter the open area where the canyon splits you will not have any trouble finding the Ugallu - in fact it will very likely find you! This is not a tough fight - in fact this guy staggers rather quickly and once staggered, dies well. Once you kill it you get the Mission Completed flag and an assessment of your performance.

If you turn around and look over your left shoulder you will see another Cie'th Stone - this is the stone for the next Stone Mission - but when you click on it before you can take the mission it gives you a mini-tutorial on a special type of stone that functions as a teleporter (called a "Waystone" in the game) so head over and click on it!

Once you learn that you can use Waystones to travel to the Cie'th Stones for previous missions you now know what you need to about the process, so go ahead and accept the next mission - A Hero's Charge!

Stone Mission 04: A Hero's Charge

Unlock Condition: Stone Mission 02

Difficulty: D

Reward: Pearl Necklace

Your task for this mission is to hunt and kill the Adroa in the Ascendant Scarp. Turn right and head along the canyon wall (on the radar map this is to the South, but if you look at the big map it is oriented visually up but it is still South). Use the jump points to head down until you reach the next save point and use it.

When you jump down the next point you will end up in a fight with a Svarog - I do not believe that you can avoid this fight but that is okay, it is worth an easy 920 CP! Fight your way through various groups of mobs until you reach the split and bear to the right, and you will find a pack of Adroa.

As you are fighting a Verdelet and an Ugallu - I am not sure whether the Adroa summoned them or they are simply add's but either way you have to kill them as well since they become part of the active fight. The Verd can be a little tough until you get it staggered, after which it goes down very fast.

The fight nets us a whopping 4,800 CP - not a bad take really - and the Mission Complete flag of course. There is a Treasure Sphere nearby with 2 lumps of Milerite in it - go ahead and grab that now, then backtrack to the save point and use it to save your current progress.

Now use the jump point to drop down to the northeast and use the stone here to trigger the next mission!

Stone Mission 05: Joyless Reunion

Unlock Condition: Stone Mission 03

Difficulty: D

Reward: Sorcerer's Mark

This mission has you fighting a Edimmu in the Tsumitran Basin - so after you flag it, backtrack North and fight the Svarog again. Keep going North and, when you reach the open area of the split where we originally entered the areas from, and head towards the North branch, where you pause to kill the Triffid's and then grab the Diabolic Tails from the Treasure Sphere that they were guarding before you continue on.

When you reach the area to the left of the Sphere you will trigger a CS of Van talking to Hope - who was sitting on the edge of the bluff taking in the scenery. He reflects upon the events that lead up to his arriving at this spot, and Van offers her take on the journey.

Follow the north branch around, take out the Triffid's, and keep going. When you reach the next open area, bear to the right and head into the long narrow inlet straight ahead (you will likely have to fight a Svarog and some Triffid's first).

As you enter the inlet you will notice a Treasure Sphere is here, and then the Edimmu will attack you - so go ahead and defeat it, earning your Sorcerer's Mark and the Mission Complete notice, and the Trophy/Achievement "Kelger's Cup" for completing all of the low-level Cie'th Stone Missions! Good on ya mate!

Now go ahead and open the Treasure Sphere and grab the Millerite from within, and pat yourself on the back for a job well done!

Stone Mission 06: No Place Like Home

Unlock Condition: Stone Mission 03

Difficulty: C

Reward: Fulmen Ring

When you trigger the mission you learn that you need to slay a Munchkin Maestro. Backtrack to the one near the middle of the circle behind us - it is located where the Treasure Sphere is on the map.

Your reward for this mission is a Fulmen Ring - and the satisfaction of having completed another mission!

Stone Mission 07: Bituitus, the Pillager*

Unlock Condition: Stone Mission 03

Difficulty: C

Reward: R&D Depot Shop Access

According to the description we need to do in Bituitus the Pillager - so after you flag the mission backtrack to the courtyard down the stairs and you will trigger the CS and the mob will spawn!

This guy does some serious debuffing, and that can make it a lot harder to take him down - plus he does pretty good damage once he has you debuffed. The trick here is to use Combat Clinic for your healing cycle so that you heal faster and you remove the debuffs that he puts on you. You will find that doing that makes this battle a snap.

Completing this mission gains you access to a new shop and the title Archaeopolitan Idol!

After you defeat him you get a quick CS in which you see him fly to the other side of the area and become encased in a large crystal balloon...

Stone Mission 08: Eleventh Hour*

Unlock Condition: Stone Mission 05

Difficulty: C

Reward: Collector's Catalog

According to the mission description a Rakshasa lurks among the route we just followed, which means we need to turn around and head back almost all the way to where we entered the Fingers of Stone a few minutes ago! Yeah, that means we will have to fight our way back through all of the mobs that we just fought our way through, take care of the mob for this mission, and then fight our way back through the same re-spawned mobs again! But hey, it is CP mate, no worries, right?

So as we approach the zone line - marked on the map as a red dot on the right side of the path - in the area where Hope was unconscious just prior to his Eidolon fight. There are three Flan with the Rakshasa - so take them all out!

As you get the Mission Complete notice you also score the Collector Catalog - a key item later in the game when you start farming for Gil! You have now completed all of the Missions in the canyon zones!

Stone Mission 09: Heave-Ho

Unlock Condition: Stone Mission 04

Difficulty: C

Reward: Rhodochrosite

According to the description for this mission we need to slay a Kaiser Behemoth near the pond. Check your map and you will see the red dot. Head for that now - you will have no trouble spotting the target, and once you do - kill it!

This can be something of a challenge if only because of the debuffs and the strength of this guys attacks... Combat Clinic will fix this and heal you quickly, and of course you can make strategic use of your potions.

Once you get the Mission Completed notice and collect your reward you have completed this Mission!

Stone Mission 10: Hollow Hope

Unlock Condition: Stone Mission 05

Difficulty: C

Reward: Super Conductor

In the Northern Highplain is an Ambling Bellows that needs killing - and we are the crew to do the job! Check your map once you have gotten close to the upper right (Northwest) hand corner of the zone and you will see that the target is located.

To reach it you will need to head down the slope near the save point that is situated on the edge of the cliff top. A little way down the slope is a Behemoth King and a Meglatotherian that you will have to either avoid or kill - I chose kill - and as they are presently fighting each other when you arrive, it would be an idea to pick on the one that is less injured, right?

Just past where you fought this very tough pair is the Ambling Bellows - a very odd looking mob indeed! He packs quite a punch, but like all of the other mobs, once you have him staggered he goes down fast and easy.

Once he is dead you get the Mission Completed notice and 4 Superconductors, and you have completed another mission!

Stone Mission 11: Pride Before a Fall

Unlock Condition: Stone Mission 05

Difficulty: C

Reward: Frost Rings

The description makes the task clear - we must kill an Adroa near the Archylte Steppe. You probably will not be surprised to learn that the target is all the way on the other side of the zone to the West-Southwest then South- a long run that will involve more than a few pick-up fights!

When you get closer to the other side you will see the target icon on the map - and there we find a pack of Adroa that we saw earlier on our way to the canyons!

At the completion of the battle we score a very nice set of Frost Rings and of course a nice chunk of CP, and yet another Mission down!

Stone Mission 12: Geiseric, The Profane

Unlock Condition: Stone Missions 05 & 07

Difficulty: C

Reward: Royal Armlet

To complete this mission we need to slay Geiseric, the Profane. Based upon the previous named target we fought in the canyons it is reasonable to anticipate that this will be a challenging fight - which is pretty cool if you think about it - and this is the first of the stone missions that we will do that have the secondary function applied to them - meaning clearing the routes, which is also cool.

To reach the target for this mission turn around and head out of the canyon and follow the wall to the left until you reach the next indented area - you will see the marker on the map well before you get there. As this is to be a more challenging fight, it would be an idea to go in with some shrouds cast, right?

As you follow the cliff face you will encounter a Treasure Sphere with 5 Librascopes in it - this is a good find since the scopes do a much better job than the Libra ability, which does not always fully ID a mob like the scopes do. Obviously you want to save the scopes for the mob types that you are not likely to encounter a lot of, making it more convenient to ID them quickly. You may be wondering why that is important since you already have the Trophy/Achievements for ID'ing 100 mobs - the reason is really simple: by ID'ing the mobs you are better able to defeat them since you understand where to hit them to do the most damage.

When you reach the area where the marker is on the map you trigger the CS in which the monster spawns - and it really is a monster! I have to say that this fight was a bit disappointing for me - I am not sure if my battle with it is typical, but it staggered really easy, and once it was staggered my team was able to keep it in the air (and thus helpless) pretty much non-stop until I ate through around 80% of its hit points in the first set of attacks.

Usually the second staggering takes more effort but in this case, not so much. It staggered almost as quick as the first time, and taking it out was really a matter of mashing the buttons a few times. There really was no risk with this fight despite the advertised dangers!

The fight pays off a whopping 10,000 CP - and as easy as this one was, it makes a prime grinding target in my mind... It was also wicked easy to 5-star. In fact this has to be one of the easiest fights I have had in the game so far!

After the Mission Complete notice we get a Royal Armlet and our party earns the title of Baneslayer!

Stone Mission 13: Eternity Unpromised

Unlock Condition: Stone Mission 12

Difficulty: C

Reward: Cobaltite

A Goblin Chieftain is the mark for this mission, and he is located on the Northern Highplain, which is the same general area that Mission 10 was in, except we do not head down the slope but head to the right of the entrance to the slope. This is a long run, with more than a few chances for some pick-up fights along the way, which is cool.

You may want to use the save point nearby prior to heading for the marker on the map - and once you reach the marker you will find the Chieftain surrounded by some of his Goblin brethren. The reward for this one is a lump of Cobaltite which will be useful later one, and another mission is now completed!

Stone Mission 14: Defender of the Flock*

Unlock Condition: Stone Mission 13

Difficulty: C

Reward: Gysahl Reins

It seems that a Sahagin infestation has threatened the Steppe Chocobos who roost in the Font of Namva - and it is our job to go give them a hand!

As you will recall we cleared the blockage in the longer canyon by completing the fight in Mission 12 - and that is a good thing as we need to head deep into that canyon near to the end in order to reach our mark! Well? What are you waiting for? Get going!

As you approach the stone you will see that the path beyond it is no longer blocked - so head on into the narrow canyon extension. When you reach the very back of the extension you trigger a CS in which Sazh "recognizes" the Chocobo... His pet baby choco gets to meet some cousins, and then KO's Sazh for some comic relief, and then the moment grows first depressed and then paranoid.

Fang tries to take responsibility for what happened to Sazh's son, but Sazh is not having any of that, and takes the burden onto himself again. It is a touching scene and a much longer CS than I was expecting, but it does end eventually.

We are now in a wide area at the end of the canyon - there is a save point near by that you should probably use, but when you try to use it moving near it triggers another CS that initiates the mission fight!

After a brief battle that is not too challenging we get the Mission Completed notice, and a sweet set of Gysahl Reins and the rank (title) of Feathered Friends!

Stone Mission 15: Tribal Warfare*

Unlock Condition: Stone Mission 12

Difficulty: C

Reward: Survivalist Catalog

The Focus for this mission is to defeat the Goblin Chieftain in the Northern Highplain - and as you read the description you learn that this particular Focus has been assigned more than once, having never been completed!

If you look at the map you will see that the target is to the far North and East, along the edge of that high cliff/bluff that we were on earlier. You may as well stay mounted on the choco for this run, since that will be faster, but remember to try to avoid contact with mobs, and that reduces the morale of your mount and, worse case scenario, can see you end up on foot.

Once you reach the target area you will see the large group of goblins - find a spot nearby and dismount, and then engage the enemy, defeating them handily! Excellent! The battle nets you a sweet 6,860 CP, some Fractured Horns, and another Mission Complete notice. The reward for the mission is the Survivalist Catalog, which is a key item that will come in useful later!

Stone Mission 16: Surrogate Slayer

Unlock Condition: Stone Mission 12

Difficulty: B

Reward: Rhodochrosite

Once you click the stone we discover that this is another chocobo-related mission. The sister of the Cie'th Stone / L'cie from before is the narrator for this one - and according to her we need to kill a Sahagin in the Font of Namva. In case you do not recall, that is the open area where we did the choco mission earlier, down the second canyon - which means we have to head all the way across the zone and down that canyon - so let's do that now!

Once you arrive the simple method is to just start killing them until you get the right one - that's my favorite approach! Believe me when you get the correct bunch you will know it - it turns into a nasty fight in which you will very likely have to do as I did, and change your deck to Combat Clinic several times.

The pay-off is 7,420 CP and some Rhodochrosite - and maybe a little surprise at how tough that fight was... I know I was not expecting that!

Stone Mission 17: A Widow's Wrath
Unlock Condition: Stone Mission 12
Difficulty: B
Reward: Perfect Conductors

Our next target is a Pulsework Champion in the Northern Highplain - a mob type that we have not seen in a while. If you look at the map you will see that the location for our target is not that far to the east - so loop back up the path and around the bluff and head for that Champion!

Once you arrive in the vicinity and see the Champion, dismount and start the fight! This fella does a fair bit of blocking and he can hit hard - so keeping an eye on your health bars is a given.

Until you stagger it, fighting this thing feels a lot like a boss fight, but once it is staggered it goes down very fast, so just don't let it kill you while you get it staggered, right?

This fight pays off in 2,860 CP, a Mission Complete, and some Perfect Conductors.

Stone Mission 18: Geiseric, The Profane
Unlock Condition: Stone Mission 12
Difficulty: C
Reward: Sorcerer's Mark

An Ambling Bellows is our next target, and it seems that it is located in the Twilit Cavern - check the map and you will see the location above - so loop around to the left path and head up to the cavern.

As with the previous fight, concentrate on the Phalanx that is blocking the path before you take out the Hoplites, and then continue along the bridge to the other end, where you will spy an Ambling Bellows and some Hoplites. Interestingly enough, we are looking for an Ambling Bellows!

Once you take out the Bellows the other mobs are easy - taking out the Bellows however, not so much. You need to concentrate upon staggering it, as you cannot really do decent damage to it until you get it staggered. The battle pays off 4,990 CP, and a Mission Complete - the mission delivering another key item, a Sorcerer's Mark!

Stone Mission 19: Triangle of Tragedy
Unlock Condition: Stone Mission 18
Difficulty: C
Reward: Cobaltite

According to the mission briefing we need to take out an Uridimmu at the Sulyya Springs. On the map that appears to be located in a detached area ahead, so we need to follow the path here in that direction and we get a brief CS in which we see Van talking to Snow. We get another flashback and as that ends and we return to the CS you should spot several Treasure Spheres nearby. After the CS ends head over to the nearest Treasure Sphere and grab the 13 Vials of Strange Fluid from within.

Now head to the next Sphere and snag its 10 Vials of Enigmatic Fluid, and then if you like take out the group of mobs nearby. Now look at the map - you can see that you need to use the jump point near the last Sphere to reach the detached area where our target is located.

After you fight the two groups, grab the 6 Moistened Scales from the Treasure Sphere here, and then fight the Uridimmu here - that is our target group. Defeating them gets us another Mission Completed notice and some Cobaltite for our reward!

Stone Mission 20: Words Unspoken
Unlock Condition: Stone Mission 18
Difficulty: C
Reward: Rhodochrosite

We need to kill another Goblin Chieftain, this one located in Taejin's Tower. A quick glance at the map shows our destination to be at the end of this area just before the jump to the next part of the path. So follow the path around and head for the group of mobs at the target site.

This fight is spirited but unexceptional, and should not be too much trouble for you. The Mission Completed notice is complimented by the lump of Rhodochrosite that is your reward, and another mission down!

Mission 21: A Tremulous Terror
Unlock Condition: None
Difficulty: C
Reward: Speed Sash

Right then, according to the briefing we need to seek out and kill a Gelatitan - which is on the platform to our left - so first thing we need to do is fight our way in that direction. After the first fight head up the stairs and take out the Managarmr here, then follow the hall and descend the next set of stairs where we find our target!

This is another fight where you really want to get the mob staggered as fast as you can because the damage that you do pre-stagger is negligible at best. Once you have it staggered on the other hand, it is butt-kicking city! The end of this battle gets you the Mission Completed notice and a sexy little Speed Sash for your troubles.

You see a sword appear in the right hand of the stone statue, and then you are returned to control of your party.

Mission 22: Infernal Machine
Unlock Condition: None
Difficulty: C
Reward: Particle Accelerators

An Ambling Bellows is our next target, and naturally it is on this level. A quick check of the map shows that we need to go to the third platform on the other end of the area - so let us do that!

Backtrack to the first statue and enter the corridor that is past it in the direction that we want to go. Our Bellows is conveniently right inside the platform area - so let's kill it!

Once it is staggered it dies quick, and its outriders are not much of a challenge either, so getting the Mission Completed notice does not require much effort. The reward is 3 Particle Accelerators - which will come in handy for upgrades - and of course we get to see another weapon appear on the second statue.

Mission 23: Natural Defenses

Unlock Condition: None
Difficulty: B
Reward: Warrior's Wristband

According to the Mission Briefing, a Gurangatch is our next target, and it is located back in the middle area, so let's head there now. Just past the first statue in the center of the room is our target - and as with the previous fights, we want to stagger it as fast as we can.

The Mission Completed notice and a nice Warrior's Wristband signals the end of the last Mission for this area, and yet another one in the series. Slap yourself on the back mate!

Mission 24: Geiseric, The Profane
Unlock Condition: Stone Missions 21 to 23
Difficulty: B
Reward: Moonblossom Seeds

A Mushussu is our next target, and it conveniently spawns in this chamber back by the elevator.

This is a fast fight and you get the Mission Completed notice a lot faster than you probably expected. The reward is some Moonblossom Seeds and the satisfaction of having completed yet another mission!

Mission 25: Spectral Haunt
Unlock Condition: Stone Missions 21 to 23
Difficulty: B
Reward: Cobaltite

A Vetala is our next special friend - though believe it or not it is actually located down on the fifth tier in the chamber we couldn't reach because it is blocked on the balcony. So our route will take us through this level to work our way down, and starts with exiting this chamber to the balcony. To the right is the main elevator that we cannot use - to the left is the entrance to the next chamber, so that is where we are heading.

Examine the statue here to trigger another realignment of the tower, and then exit to the balcony and run to the right to the far chamber that is now open to us. In the corner of this chamber is a Treasure Sphere with 4 Tears of Woe in it. In the opposite corner there is another Sphere with an Unsetting Sun. After you empty the Sphere head down the stairs to the right and fight the Vetala, which like many of the previous fights is one where you will want to stagger him and then re-stagger him quickly. The Tri-Disaster deck works really well for that, but once you stagger switch back to your Relentless Attack deck.

Mission 26: So Shrill, The Cry
Unlock Condition: Stone Missions 21 to 23
Difficulty: B
Reward: Diamond Bangle

A Penanggalon is our next target - so turn around and head back the way that we came, head back up the stairs and out onto the balcony, go to the far chamber and enter, turning to the left. This is the location of our prey - so jump on in and make them dead!

A Diamond Bangle is our reward for this mission, as well as the title of Monumental Ally!

Mission 27: Mithridates, The Lone

Unlock Condition: Defeat Dahaka

Difficulty: B

Reward: Blaze Ring

As the title suggests, Mithridates is our target for this one - but before we can go and fight him we have to do a few things to cause him to spawn.

First run around the area to the statue and examine it to cause it to summon the lift behind it. Now get on that lift and go to the seventh tier, where you need to examine the statue that is behind the lift so that he re-aligns the tower. Now head out of this chamber on to the balcony and grab the Collector Catalog from the Treasure Sphere - this is a wicked valuable key item that you will need later so do not forget to grab it!

Run to the end of the balcony and up the ramp to summon the central lift, then take that to the Apex tier (you cannot skip this step and go directly to the Ground Tier), and then ride it all the way back down to the ground tier and you will see that our target has now spawned! Excellent!

This can be a very nasty fight if your timing is off - and when I say that, what I mean is if your healing cycle ends up opposite the mobs special attack cycle, you will end up near death just when you have him staggered, which makes hurting it very difficult since you have to spend half of its stagger cycle getting your team revived and back to full health! This is one of those fights where you have to be patient and try to get a sense of his charge and special pattern, then time your healing so that you are at your best when he is about to be staggered.

Once you have him staggered bring down the hammer then rinse and repeat until he is dead!

This fight pays 7,500 CP which seems like it is not enough considering that it was a tougher fight than the boss fight we just finished at the top of the tower! Still, it is another mission down, we get a Blaze Ring as our reward, and the title Grudge Settler... What is up with these titles anyway? It is not like this is an MMO - who is every going to see these titles??

Mission 28: Faded Glory

Unlock Condition: None

Difficulty: C

Reward: Giant's Glove

The target for this mission is Ceratosaurs - if you look at the map you will see that our target is located on the street area above where we are now. Head down the sloping street to trigger a CS - then continue along the path and you will come to a building - enter and go up the stairs and you will find some burlap sacks that you can examine - do that to learn that they are stuffed with tools and some other details. There are other things you can examine here - do that until you get a CS of Van being reunited with her robot.

Sazh declares that he can fix this robot - and that triggers the details for the side-mission 'Repairing Bhakti' that instructs you to locate the 5 parts needed to repair him that are all located here in the village. Excellent!

There is a Treasure Sphere here with a Heavenly Axis in it - grab that and continue on the path, where you will find a mob near the jump points that you want to kill to obtain the first of the 5 parts for the robot side-mission. You should get the Trochoid Gear from this mob...

Head up the stairs on the left to get a Libroscope from the Treasure Sphere here, then continue on the path, fighting the group of mobs that are the target for this mission! Excellent! Another mission down and a Giant's Glove for our reward!

Mission 29: Faltering Faith

Unlock Condition: Stone Mission 20

Difficulty: B

Reward: Uraninite

Having just finished fighting a Juggernaut we now learn that the target of this mission is... A Juggernaut. Right then, head back to the previous Cie'th Stone and teleport back to the Tower and head back towards it to the larger open area - and what do you know?! Here is our target!

I actually managed to get a preemptive strike in which made all the difference in the world, allowing me to stagger in the first attack. That helped but this Juggernaut seems to have a much deeper pool of HP than the previous one, and takes a lot more killing.

Taking out the Juggernaut earns us some Uraninite as a reward, and the satisfaction of yet another mission completed!

Mission 30: Syphax, The Insidious

Unlock Condition: Reach Sulyya Springs

Difficulty: B

Reward: Uraninite

Obviously Syphax is our target - and he dwells in an abandoned dig. Now we need to head back to one of the stones we have completed so that we can teleport back to Mah'habara. Once you arrive head down the ramp North-Northeast (the closest to you) and then take the path to the East.

Note: If you left the Atomos at the Springs, obviously it is no longer here for you to use it as a jump point to cross the bridge. If that is the case, you need to use the nearby stone to teleport to the Springs and ride Atomos back to the mine. Once you do that, you can then use it as your jump point to cross the bridge.

Follow the path in - there is a save point just around the first curve - then take the right branch ahead and at the end of that you will find our mark! There is a Treasure Sphere with a Moogle Puppet on the way - you should grab that, and the Perovskite from the Sphere just past the circle in the path as well.

Ahead of you on the right just before the end is another save point - you should use that, and then do some updating if you have not been keeping up! Check your job levels and apply your banked CP, shop to replace the expendables you have used up, and now would be a great time to look to your kit. What I mean by that is check to see that you already have the best kit equipped and if you do not, well then, equip it! You can have the game do that for you by using the optimize feature going with either balanced or offensive as it suits you. Once you have done that, look at the current equipped items to see if there are any you can and should upgrade. By now you should have quite a selection of resources with which to upgrade!

Speaking if upgrading - you should be sure to maintain a supply of bones so that you can use those to keep your bonus multiplier at 3X at all times, to squeeze the maximum upgrade points from each resource that you use. If you need more bones you can purchase them from Creature Comforts.

Now that all that is done, let us head for the mark! This is not a difficult fight - in fact you can do the entire thing on Relentless Assault switching to Solidarity as needed.

Our reward for this mission is some Uraninite and the rank of Heartstriker - and the satisfaction of another mission down!

Mission 31: Newfound Purpose

Unlock Condition: Stone Mission 30

Difficulty: B

Reward: Perfect Conductors

The mark for this one is a Pulsework Champion that is located on the opposite side of this area. Once you head up the slope run along the rampart and you will find the mark.

This fight is an easy one to 5-star, and pays off in 3 Perfect Conductors.

Mission 32: And Then There Was One

Unlock Condition: Reach Mah'habara

Difficulty: B

Reward: Glass Buckle

Our mark for this one is an Amam - located on the Western Benchland. Head back to the stone we teleported in by and use it to teleport to the Steppe Northern Highplane. Check the map - our mark is located in the bight of the shape that looks sort of like Australia - head there now.

Mind the Amam's poison breath as it will apply debuffs to you . The fight is basic, and does not require much in the way of deck shifting. We earn a Glass Buckle and the satisfaction of another mission completed!

Mission 33: A Parent's Pledge

Unlock Condition: Stone Mission 30

Difficulty: B

Reward: White Cape

An Adamanchelid is our next mark, and it is located in the Eastern Tors - back in the main area of the Steppe. So go ahead and hit the teleport stone and zip to the Northern Highplane, grab the choco nearby and head for the marker on the map.

To be clear the giant walker ahead of you is in fact the mark. Are you ready for a massive fight? This huge mob has a deep and wide HP pool and can hurt you good, so keeping an eye on your health bars is a given... The stomp attack this thing uses will kill you if you are in the yellow - fair warning - so be quick to change decks and heal when you go into the yellow. It should only take a pair of stagers to put him down, and when you do you are rewarded with a nice chunk of CP and a White Cape, along with the rank of Adamantine Knight!

Mission 34: Zenobia, The Butcher

Unlock Condition: Stone Mission 30

Difficulty: B

Reward: Hermes Sandal

Our mark is obvious by the title - don't you love it when the mission is personal like that? Anyway, the mark

location for this one is right here in the area below - so there will be no running around for this one!

When you reach the marker on the map you trigger a CS that is both ominous and sort of cute - something of a change from the usual :) Kind of reminds me of the scene from Holy Grail where the knight says - what, behind the bunny?

This guy is actually pretty tough - and I found that the best approach is to use Tri-disaster to stagger and then Relentless Assault to damage, and when needed, Solidarity to heal.

You should have no trouble 5-starring this one, and the reward is a nice pair of Hermes Sandals and the title Curse Lifter. Well, that, and the satisfaction of another mission completed!

Mission 35: The Road Less Traveled

Unlock Condition: None

Difficulty: C

Reward: Witch Bracelet

Our first mark in what will no doubt be a long series of marks is a Gurangatch - the gatekeeper to adventure!

Once you flag the mission you get a CS in which you are teleported to the Crossroads - the mark is ahead just inside the right branch - just use Tri-disaster to stagger and then Relentless Assault to take him out - it is a quick 5-star mission that way.

Your reward is a Segmented Carapace, a Witch's Bracelet, and the satisfaction of another mission down and the entry fee to the trials paid in full!

Mission 36: Dark Deliverance

Unlock Condition: Stone Mission 35

Difficulty: C

Reward: Uraninite

The mark is an Amam - we have fought those before - so flag the mission and we are once again teleported.

The reward for this one is a lump of Uraninite and another mission down!

Mission 37: Dying of the Light

Unlock Condition: Stone Mission 35

Difficulty: C

Reward: Star Pendant

A Rafflesia is our mark, and once we teleport in you will find them just ahead. The reward for this mission is a Star Pendant.

The best tactic seems to be to use Tri-disaster to stagger and then Relentless to kill.

If you backtrack to the stone we used to arrive here you can see your progress in the trials - A1: 35, B1: 36, and B2: 37 are now complete. I mention this only because you can use those gold stones to keep track if you lose track of what you are doing.

Mission 38: Moonlit Madness

Unlock Condition: Stone Mission 36

Difficulty: B

Reward: Diamond Bangle

Our mark is a Verdelet - and once we flag this mission we are teleported to the new area, where the first thing we see is a welcome save point. Go ahead and use that now, and then run along the path to the mobs - as you fight them one turns into a Juggernaut!

The best approach here is to use Tri-disaster and Relentless, and you will take it down quickly. Your reward for this is a Diamond Bangle and as always, the satisfaction of another mission down!

Mission 39: Seeing Stars

Unlock Condition: Stone Missions 36 - 37

Difficulty: C

Reward: Siltstone Ring

The mark for this one is an Ochu - and once you flag it you are teleported into the zone, where directly to your left ahead is a save point. This fight does not really require a specific strategy, though you might find that using Van or Fang as your lead can be faster than the other party members.

You will want to concentrate on the Ochu first, as he can re-spawn the outriders which will force you into an attrition position if you do not realize that it is doing that. Stagger the Ochu quickly and then kill it, then mop up the outriders.

Your reward is some CP, a Siltstone Ring, and another mission down!

Mission 40: Solar Power

Unlock Condition: Stone Mission 37

Difficulty: B

Reward: Zealot's Amulet

The mark for this mission is a Verdelet - so when you are ready flag it and be teleported to the zone, use the save point on the left, and then proceed to the mark.

I used Lightning, Fang, and Van, in Relentless Assault, and simply killed the pair of marks without needing to change decks for a 5-star completion.

The reward for this very brief mission is a Zealot's Amulet and 5-starrinf yet another mission!

Mission 41: Gaian Grudge

Unlock Condition: Stone Mission 38

Difficulty: A

Reward: Doctor's Code

The mark for this mission is some of the comic-looking Tonberry - touching the stone teleports us to the new zone, and a quick check of the map shows us the marks in a branch to the left ahead.

These are not especially tough mobs - one on one - but you have three of them here, and they have specials that can kill you instantly if you are even a little hurt when they strike. I hate to say it, but success in this fight includes luck - the luck that your leader is not who gets targeted by the special attack, and that you are able to heal quickly.

These fights are supposed to be hard - and they are supposed to get harder the closer you get to the end of a string in these sequences. This fight is the second to last in this (the upper) string. If you looked at the flowchart of these fights that should be obvious to you.

As with previous fights, the idea is to stagger and kill the first mob as quickly as you can - the quicker the better as that reduces the number of special attacks you must endure, but in this case keeping them from charging their specials is the way to go. You will have no trouble at all 5-starring this if you do the following:

- Deceptisol
- Aegisol
- Fortisol
- Quake
- Stagger and kill 1
- Quake
- Stagger and kill 1 (2 if you can otherwise repeat the last step)

Using this set of tactics you should have no trouble with this fight! You gain 22,500 CP, a Doctor's Code, and another 5-Star Mission completed!

Mission 42: Anti-Hero

Unlock Condition: Stone Missions 38-39

Difficulty: B

Reward: Witch Bracelet

The mark for this mission is a Borgbear Hero - and in case you are not aware this is one of the harder fights.

The configuration that I found worked best for me was Vanille (as leader) with Snow and Lightning. Set your default deck to Smart Bomb (Saboteur/Ravager/Ravager) and if you do not have that one already set up do that now. Set Smart Bomb as your default deck, and make sure that you have at least Solidarity and Relentless Assault as well.

Follow the path to the right (check the map so you know where you are going) fighting your way through the groups that are not the one you containing the mark and once you are near the mark pop a Deceptisol so that you get the jump on them. If your TP is low, pop an Ethersol BEFORE starting the fight so that you have that available, and then, well, go get 'em tiger!

Slow the group and cast whatever other debuffs you like, and then stagger and kill them quickly. Yeah I know that seems obvious but it is the best way to 5-star this so here I am telling you to do that. You should summon and gestalt - that will help in staggering the hero quicker - but dealing direct damage immediately after staggering is important, and make sure that you are targeting the Hero and not an outrider as that would be a waste..

Your reward for this fight is a Witch's Bracelet, some CP and the satisfaction of 5-starring another mission in the chain!

Mission 43: The Hero Never Dies

Unlock Condition: Stone Missions 39 - 40

Difficulty: B

Reward: Speed Sash

The mark for this mission is a Borgbear Hero - we have fought those before :)

About halfway along the first branch there is a Treasure Sphere with a Starblossom Seed in it - grab that and continue along to the mark. This is a straight forward fight - simply stagger them and kill them as quickly as you can and it is over.

Your reward is a Speed Sash an completing another mission. Yay you!

Mission 44: The Old Ones Go To Rest

Unlock Condition: Stone Mission 40

Difficulty: A

Reward: General's Belt

The mark for this mission is a Corrosive Custard - and its friends - but the dangerous one is the Corrosive Custard, so that is who you should target and kill first.

After you quickly take out the Corrosive Custard, kill the Monstrous Flan and the Hybrid Flora in a fairly straight forward battle using Relentless Assault exclusively. You should not even need to heal for the entire fight - though I suppose if you are unlucky or slow...

You should easily 5-star this fight, and collect your reward of a General's Belt!

Mission 45: Emergent Evolution

Unlock Condition: Stone Mission 41

Difficulty: A

Reward: Hunter's Friend

When you arrive in the area you will see a save point that is nearby - go ahead and use that. Now we are going to change the team a bit, making Vanille the leader, and we are also going to alter her kit - have her equip the Belladonna Wand as her weapon - if you have not yet upgraded it, go ahead and do that now, which should leave it with 65 Strength and 131 Magic.

This can be a tough fight if you try to approach it like usual - and before you go to engage the mark, make sure that you have in your deck the Attrition configuration (Vanille: Saboteur, Fang: Sentinel, and Lightning: Medic) and set that as your default deck.

Now all that you need to do is engage the mob and, using Van, repeatedly cast Death until the mark dies. Eassey-peasey lemon-squeezy!

You get a 5-Star on this, 50,000 CP, a Hunter's Friend and the rank Righteous Avenger - and the immense satisfaction of another very tough mission completed! Go You!

Mission 46: On Silent Wing

Unlock Condition: Stone Mission 42

Difficulty: A

Reward: Gilgamesh Inc Shop Access

This is one of the tough fights (Class A) and your target is a Zirnitra, As you enter the area of the fight the Fal'Cie will summon the mark - before that you will want to reconfigure as follows:

First - ahead of you on the right is a save point - use that. To start you should have your party set up as Vanille (leader), Snow, and Lightning. Your active deck should be Attrition (Savoteur/Sentinel/Medic).

Enter the area and pause just before engaging the mark - and move in. Make sure that you have the Belladonna Wand as Van's weapon - then repeatedly cast Death on the mark until it dies and you have won!

If you are trying to 5-star this first time out you are going to want to switch between staggering and direct damage (the tactic I outline above is for winning this battle not 5-staring it), but I seriously recommend just winning it for now, and then returning after you have fully unlocked the Crystarium and upgraded your jobs before trying to 5-star this battle.

Your reward for this one is a nice chunk of CP, the pass for Gilgamesh, Inc. (another shop), the rank Halcyonian Hero, and one more mission down!

Mission 47: Unfocused Rage

Unlock Condition: Stone Mission 42

Difficulty: B

Reward: Mnar Stone

The only decks I used for this fight were Relentless Assault, Smart Bomb, Tri-disaster, and Combat Clinic. Starting with Smart Bomb to debuff him, I switched to Tri-disaster to stagger him (you can only damage him when he is staggered), then Relentless to damage.

Strategic use of potions for light damage allowed me to maintain the pressure on him - I used shrouds for the fight and I suggest that you do the same!

Eventually he is going to be able to charge and use his special attack - which will bring you real close to dying - so when that happens be sure that you quickly heal yourself first, and then your party members. As soon as you are healed switch to Smart Bomb and restore the debuffs to slow his charging.

Simply rinse and repeat until you have won!

Your reward for this fight is the Mnar Stone - which is a transformational catalyst. After you defeat this guy and completely cycle through the mission screens you will unlock the Trophy/Achievement "Dorgan's Trophy" (it is worth 30 GP).

You will also unlock the final mission in the Titan's Trials - Stone Mission 51!

Mission 48: The Abyss Stares Back

Unlock Condition: Stone Mission 43

Difficulty: A

Reward: Twenty Sided Die

Your mark is another Verdelet - so flag this and teleport in, and then set your party to Lightning, Fang, and Snow, and alter your deck to Cerberus (Commando/Commando/Commando). Set that as your default and make sure that you have atleast Solidarity, Relentless Assault, and Combat Clinic in your decks just in case.

Use the save point ahead on the right and then proceed into the zone. As with the other master battles, when you enter the clearing ahead the Fal'Cie will summon the mark - marks in this case - and you will kill them. If you are quick and aware you will kill them all or cast an interrupt before one of them can summon a Tonberry - if not you will have more of a fight on your hands than you really need but what can you do?

If you are having trouble with this, once you engage simply spam the Blitz Attack on the mobs - that will end the fight very quickly without giving them a chance to summon a Tonberry.

The reward for 5-starring this fight is 4,000 CP, some random spoils (I got some Supple Leather and a Torn Leather), and a Twenty-sided Die.

Mission 49: Tyrannicide

Unlock Condition: Stone Mission 43

Difficulty: A

Reward: Particle Accelerators

This one is sort of a let-down, I just want to say that now. It is a Master Fight - the mark is a Tyrant ,which you will recall we have faced before. Enter the zone and use the save point ahead on the right.

Head into the clearing and the Fal'Cie will summon the mark - and all you need to do is stay in Relentless Assault and kill it. Well, stagger and then kill it - but this is dead simple and you will not even have to heal or change decks at all! Once dead you get the 5-stars, 3,510 CP, 7 Particle Accelerators (which will come in handy for upgrading kit later) and of course the satisfaction of having completed another mission with 5-stars!

Mission 50: Road to Predation

Unlock Condition: Stone Mission 44

Difficulty: B

Reward: Scarletite

The mark is a Humbaba - and no real preparation is required for this one - just head on in and use the save point on the right. Pop a Firtisol and Aegisol if you have them (I only had an Aegisol myself) and then head into the clearing and have the Fal'Cie summon the mark.

The reward for this mission is a Scarletite - an upgrade item that will come in handy later.

Mission 51: Attacus, The Soulless*

Unlock Condition: All Titan Trial Missions

Difficulty: A

Reward: Genji Glove

Obviously this is a desirable mission in the sense that its reward is the Genji Glove... Take whatever route you want to get to the stone, and once you get there you will teleport in to the next area - which should be familiar to you by now! Use the save point ahead, then use your shrouds, and finally head into the clearing...

The mark in this case is Attacus - who I thought was the big mob that first gets spawned, but no, he turns out to be the little guy that kills the first one! I had flashbacks of Men In Black for a few seconds, but there was no time to let that series of images play out in my head before the fight started!

This is basically a long and drawn-out fight. You cannot stagger this fellow - all you can do is build the meter and damage it as much as you can. At various points it triggers its special - when that happens make sure that you change your deck to one with a Sentinel that is NOT you (the leader) so that it can cast provoke on him and thus bear the brunt of the attack. That way you do not risk being killed by the special attack.

Be patient, whittle away at his HP, and eventually you will kill him!

Your reward for this fight is a Zealot's Amulet and random spoils, the Genji Glove, and the satisfaction of having won a tough fight, completed the Titan's Trials, and finally, completed another stone mission leaving just three left to fight!

When the mission screen ends you will unlock the Trophy/Achievement 'Natural Selector' (which is worth 30 GP). As this unlocks you are teleported back to the entrance to the Trials area - so go ahead and backtrack to the teleport stone now!

Mission 52: Head in the Clouds

Unlock Condition: Reach Sulyya Springs

Difficulty: A

Reward: Gale Ring

The mark for this mission is a Zirnitra - and its location if you look at the map is almost directly on the other side of the zone. Head in a northerly direction and as you get to the other side check the map to see where you need to be, and then head there.

The easiest method for completing this mission is to switch to Van as your party leader, and then set Attrition as your default deck. Now engage the mark and spam Death until it dies. Voila! Mission Managed!

In case you are wondering - yes, that was a luck based fight. Basically you keep spamming the Death Ability until it actually works. If the mark did not die when you cast it it means that it did not work. Have fun with that!

Your reward for this is 20,000 CP, Menacing Wings, and a Gate Ring.

Mission 53: Freedom from Fear

Unlock Condition: None

Difficulty: A

Reward: Blaze Ring

The mark is a Zirnitra in the Massif, so turn around and head for the teleport stone, and use that to teleport to the Pad in the Massif. Once you are there, head along the path towards the circle until you encounter the mark.

The reward for this mission is a Blaze Ring - and yet again the satisfaction of another mission down!

Mission 54: The Bigger They Are

Unlock Condition: Find a Cactuar

Difficulty: B

Reward: Cactuar Doll

Warning: This is one of the toughest fights in the game if you play it straight - meaning you try to fight it like a normal fight.

The mark for this mission is a Gigantaur - which we have tangled with before. The location for the mark is directly east on top of the large bluff. Once you reach the spot you will get a CS with a giant Cactuar (actually it is called a Gigantiaur), during which Sazh has a rather amusing exchange. Evidently he has some prior experience with this particular mob.

There are two ways that you can handle this fight: (1) Complete the story mode, cap your jobs, upgrade your kit, and then fight it; or (2) Use the "Luck" style of fighting. I chose to do (2) but YMMV!

Method 1: Complete the story mode.

Basically it is what I said above - you complete the story mode, then cap off all of your jobs, then upgrade all of your kit, and finally you fight this thing. Doing it by this method is not by any means a fast fight - and you can still fail.

Method 2: Luck mode.

Like some of the previous missions where we spammed the Death spell, this is a luck mode approach in which we are basically counting on one of the passive abilities to kick in, allowing us to kill the mob. In this case the passive ability we are relying upon is "Random: Instant Chain" which, when it kicks in, instantly staggers your opponent.

If you want to use mode 2 you will need to do all of the following steps:

- Alter your party structure to Lightning (Leader), Fang, and Vanille.
- If you do not already have it in your decks, add Tireless Charge (Commando/Commando/Medic).
- Equip Lightning with the Hauteclaire, the Hunter's Friend, and an Energy Sash.
- Equip Fang with the Survivalist Catalog and Speed Sash.

The fight: Basically you are hoping that one or both trigger the ability on the first attack, which will instantly stagger the mark. The ability kicks in when one of your party members actually hits the mark, at which point they will stagger, and you should immediately use Summon, and attack the mark, continuing the attack until it is dead. This should take less than a minute to complete once you start a fight that spawns the passive ability, but you may have to die and restart a dozen or more times before that happens.

Bear in mind that this guys regular attack does 10K in damage, and he will rotate through your party targeting each member one at a time. If you are unlucky he will target Lightning first, which will be a bad thing if he is then staggered, because you could end up dying anyway, but let us hope not.

Once the mark is dead you collect your reward: 20,000 CP, a Cactuar Doll, the rank of Needleworker, and of course, another mission down with 5-stars! Once you complete the fight you also unlock the Trophy/Achievement "Floraphobe" (which is worth 30 GP which is a lot for this game)! How cool is that? This is also one of the missions that factors in a couple of other mission-related Trophies/Achievements so it is all good.

Mission 55: Can't We All Just Get Along?*

Unlock Condition: Stone Mission 14

Difficulty: A

Reward: Growth Egg

This is a key battle in the game mostly due to the reward for this mission - so obviously it is one we want to complete sooner rather than later - so if you decide to take this one out of order I will forgive you :)

The mark for this mission is a Neochu, and it is located in the Agraa's Pasture section of the Haerii, so backtrack to the teleport stone and head to the Haerii now.

This is a Class A Battle - and as such it is another one that we are going to rely upon a strategy of Luck, Luck, Luck!

So first thing you need to do is configure your team - in this case Vanille will be the leader, and you can either use Lighting and Fang, or Lighting and Snow - the later being a good one since Snow has 12,850 HP as opposed to the 10,400 that Fang has. Either way the point here is for Van to spam Death while the other two tank the damage. Make sure that you have Vanille equip the Belladonna Wand (if it is not already equipped) as her weapon for this, right?

Let me be clear here - you are likely going to die. A lot. And fail. The reason for that is simple enough - we are simply re-trying until Van gets a lucky cast of Death right off the bat, taking out the mark, after which it is a simple matter of mopping up the pika's that remain, and collecting our well deserved super special amazing cannot live without it reward!

Once you arrive in the Haerii head for the canyon to the North and use the save spot just inside that before you continue to the Pasture at the other end and begin this fight with our mark! Just spam Death and cross your fingers for an early trigger. Using shrouds would not hurt here if you have them, since they will help in keeping you alive longer...

Once the mark is dead it is a simple matter of healing up and then taking out the pika's - which you should not really have a lot of trouble doing. I would be shocked if you did not come out of this with a full 5-star rating...

Your reward for this mission is 62,500 CP, some random spoils, a Growth Egg, and another 5-star mission completed!

Mission 56: A Toothy Grin

Unlock Condition: Reach Taejin's Tower

Difficulty: C

Reward: Rhodochrosite

The mark for this one is an Ugallu - so after the brief CS jump on the nearby Choco and head in that direction and use the teleport stone to go to the Highlands in the Massif - then head East until you reach the mark, which you can easily see on the map.

The fight is brief and easy, and with the Egg now equipped, now worth a nice chunk of CP! The reward for this one is a chunk of Rhodochrosite.

Stone Mission 57: What's Yurs is Brine

Unlock Condition: Reach Taejin's Tower

Difficulty: C

Reward: Uraninite

The next mark is a Sahagin, and it is located in the canyons, so take the teleport stone to the Vallis Base Camp, and from there head West until you reach the mark.

The mark group dies very very fast and is not a challenge - in fact the challenge is actually getting ot the fight! Anyway, kill them and grab your reward - some Uraninite - and head for the teleport stone!

Stone Mission 58: The Culler of Many

Unlock Condition: Reach Taejin's Tower

Difficulty: B

Reward: Speed Sash

A Humbaba is our next mark, so head back to the teleport stone and use it to teleport to Mah'habara's Twilit Cavern, and take the Northeast tunnel. Fight your way through the tunnel and use the save point just before the mark. Once you've saved the game go ahead and engage the mark.

Stagger the mark and kill it to collect your 10,000 CP, random spoils, and another Speed Sash. One more mission down!

Stone Mission 59: Two-Faced Fiend

Unlock Condition: Reach Taejin's Tower

Difficulty: A

Reward: Energy Sash

The mark for this mission is a Zirnitra, and this is a Class A Mission - fair warning.

Once you have flagged the mission jump on the nearby chocobo and head for the teleport stone, using it to go to the Tower and then backtrack up the path to the mark. This battle presents a specific challenge in that the mark has a half dozen helpers - and you need to eliminate them all immediately or this quickly becomes unmanageable.

The easiest way to do that is to start by using your shrouds - including Deceptisol - so that you get the jump on them. Immediately summon Lightning's Eidolon, enter Gestalt and use the X-button to initiate her spinning attack. That will kill all of the outriders, leaving you facing just the mark!

Now simply stagger him, switch to Relentless Assault, and kill him. A nice and easy 5-star fight!

Your reward for this fight is 48,400 CP, random spoils, an Energy Sash, the rank of Hand of Wrath, and of course another 5-starred mission down!

Stone Mission 60: Degela Vu

Unlock Condition: Reach Oerba

Difficulty: A

Reward: Mnar Stone

After you flag the mission head to the teleport stone and teleport to the Tower stone - the mark for this one is a Gelatitan and doesn't that sound fun?

The mark is located on the deck on top of the tower - which is fine since we have already unlocked both the main and the secondary lifts there! So teleport in and then head for the tower, inside take the main lift to the Spire Level, and run around to the other side of the deck to trigger this fight. You may want to save and then shroud first - I know I did.

There are three Gelatitans here and as long as you use a Deseptisol so that you get the sneak on them, you will almost instantly stagger the first one. Having done that you should be able to kill the staggered one in one complete attack cycle between your three party members, leaving you with just a pair to go. Neither of them will be staggered, so start out by staggering and killing them one at a time!

I am not sure why this one is rated 'A' as it does not feel like an A-Level fight... I only used Relentless Assault as I was a bit tired and did not want to put out the effort, so I only managed to get 4-stars on this one. If I had set up a few extra decks I could easily have 5-starred it, and I should add that I stayed in Relentless Assault the whole time, not having to heal even once.

The reward for this mission is a Mnar Stone - not sure how you pronounce that - which is a transformational catalyst, meaning that it can be used to upgrade the type of an item to something new. According to its description it is thought to grant the holder visions - wouldn't it be cool if these really did have secondary uses?

Stone Mission 61: I, Juggernaut
Unlock Condition: Reach Oerba
Difficulty: A
Reward: Royal Armlet

The mark for this one is obviously a Juggernaut - a mob we have faced before several times. The location of the mark is in the village, so head to the teleport stone and use it to go to the stone in Oerba Village Proper. Head down the nearby ramp and around the corner - the mark is in the open area outside of Van's house and the tank-shaped building.

If you use your shrouds - including Deceptisol - you can sneak up on the Juggernaut and stagger him in the first exchange. You should be able to shave off about 25% of its HP. After that you will need to stagger and pound it, then stagger and pound it again and it will be dead!

Your reward for this is a Royal Armlet and the satisfaction of another mission completed and only a few left to go!

Stone Mission 62: Indomitable Will*
Unlock Condition: Stone Mission 44
Difficulty: A
Reward: Genji Glove

This is an important mission mostly due to its reward - a Genji Glove - which is an item that I am sure you will find useful :)

The mark for this mission is a Raktavija - which is not a mob we are familiar with. It is located within the Steppes - so head in the direction of the stone that we have been using for teleporting - for the record that is the Archlyte Steppe Central Expanse.

This battle requires some party preparation - you will want to set your team up - I chose Lightning, Fang, and Vanille.

You will want to check your decks and make certain that you have at a minimum the following decks present: Relentless Assault (Ravager/Commando/Ravager), Tri-disaster (all Ravagers), and Hero's Charge (Commando/Synergist/Medic).

You will be using Tri-disaster to stagger, Relentless Assault for direct damage, and Hero's Charge for healing and debuffing. You will want to use your shrouds prior to the fight - including Deceptisol. In addition to all of this, you will want to configure your party for a magic damage exclusive fight - the marks will only use magic, so you will want to - at a bare minimum - equip whatever Magus' Bracelets that you have handy.

As you are approaching the area where the stone is if you check the map you will see that our mark is located on the third raised bluff. You are going to want a chocobo for this if you are not already on one - if not grab one from near the Central Expanse Stone because you cannot reach the marks without the chocobo.

As far as tactics go, get the drop on the mobs to try to get in some stagger meter before they charge their shields - I am not actually positive that you can do that, I tried and failed, but if you can, you should. Once you have engaged them, you will want to cast the Imperil and Slow debuffs on the mark that is your present target, and then change your deck to Tri-disaster and pull down the shields by staggering the mob.

After that change to Relentless Assault and pound it. If you can, have Lightning use her Army of One ability, otherwise just deal damage and be damn sure that you heal quickly because these things have a special attack that will kill you if you are even a little damaged.

As far as kit goes, I ended up equipping my party as follows:

- Lightning: Witch's Bracelet x2 Diamond Bangle
- Fang: Witch's Bracelet, Power Glove, Goddesses' Favor
- Vanille: Witch's Bracelet x2 Magician's Mark

All of these accessories were capped - if you do not have enough Witch's Bracelets bear in mind that all they are is Rune Bracelets that have been upgraded. There are better kit items that could be used - if you have them - but as I did not, this is what I had. It was the best of what I had, and I was able to afford the costs of capping them by upgrading. YMMV.

If you do decide to upgrade your kit, remember that 37 Sturdy Bone (sold by Creature Comforts Shop) will give you the maximum 3X multiplier right off the bat, and you should always have the multiplier capped before you apply upgrade items!

The Battle: Once you are satisfied with your kit, have edited your deck, and are comfortable with the tactics to use for this fight, go ahead and jump on a chocobo and head for the bluff on which the mark is located. Again accessing this area requires the use of a choco - and after you make the third jump and are on top of the bluff with the marks, you need to dismount prior to attacking.

Dismount, apply your shrouds, engage the beastie, and use the strategies detailed above and this should be a fun and interesting battle!

I don't know about you but by the time I won this fight I had some serious hate on for the programmers... Ah well.

Stone Mission 63: Crushed by Doubt*
Unlock Condition: Reach the Faultwarrens
Difficulty: A
Reward: Genji Glove

The mark for this one is an Adamantortoise - oh my... It is located back in the Steppe in the indented area to the left of the circle of stones - check the map in that area to see the target location.

The easiest way to win this battle is to make Van your leader, add the Perseverance deck, make it the default deck, and then equip as much earth and element resist kit as you have. Now simply spam Death at it until it dies.

Right - I know that this feels like a cheap way to do this... But the bottom line is that it is quick, you get 5-stars without having to be frustrated, and you get to move on to the next mission sooner rather than later!

Your reward for this second to last mission is another Genji Glove - and if you have not already done so you will also unlock the Trophy/Achievement "Limit Breaker" (worth 30 GP), and the satisfaction of a job well done!

Note: Killing this mob will not unlock the Adamant Will Trophy/Achievement - to do that you need to kill one of the walkers near the circle of stones.

Stone Mission 64: The Doomherald

Unlock Condition: Stone Missions 27 & 51

Difficulty: A

Reward: Gold Watch

Like many of the previous missions there is an easy way and a hard way to do this - actually it is more accurate to say that there is one easy way, and a whole bunch of hard ways - and what we are going to do is the easy way, alright then?

The mark for this mission is a Vercingetorix - and this is hands down the hardest mob and mission in the game - if you try to fight it. This thing is also called The Bane Lord - that should clue you in on its attitude and abilities...

One thing that may not be instantly obvious to you - especially if you have already tried to fight this thing and failed - is that it can be Poisoned. That is key - because one of its innate abilities is to recover its HP, so being able to bleed away its HP without having to constantly heal your party as it pounds the crap out of you is a major advantage! Really - it takes almost all of the frustration out of the fight!

- Party Prep -

First thing you need to do is change your party to Sazh, Fang, and Hope.

Now create the following decks:

- Tri-disaster (Rav/Rav/Rav)
- Cerberus (Com/Com/Com)
- Infiltration (Sab/Sab/Sab)
- Recuperation (Syn/Med/Syn)
- Salvation (Med/Med/Med)
- Tortoise (Sen/Sen/Sen)

As far as equipment goes, pick your best weapons - I recommend the Antares Deluxes for Sazh, the Glaive for Fang, and the Skycutter for Hope - unless you have better versions of those, or you have a weapon that you feel is better than the ones I suggest.

As for accessories, I used the following:

- Sazh -

General's belt (Lvl 1)

Witch's Bracelet (capped)

Royal Armband (Lvl 7)

Witch's Bracelet (capped)

- Fang -

Witch's Bracelet (capped)

Genji Glove (Lvl 1)

Power Glove (capped)

Entite Ring (capped)

- Hope -

Platinum Bangle (capped)

Sorcerer's Mark (Lvl 1)

Entite Ring (Lvl 1)

Witch's Bracelet (capped)

-- Basic Strategy --

- (1) Use the Recuperation Deck to cast Haste on your party.
- (2) Switch to Infiltration and stack 5 Poisons and unleash.
- (3) Stack 5 Imperil and unleash
- (4) Switch to Tri-disaster and stagger him
- (5) Switch to Cerberus and damage him
- (6) He will go into shield mode and cannot be damaged - when this happens:
- (7) Switch to Salvation and quickly heal your party
- (8) Switch to Recuperation and restore Shell, Haste, and whatever else you can if you have the time.
- (9) Goto (1)

Once you get him down to around half-health he will start doing a spin attack regularly - when that starts to happen you want to IMMEDIATELY switch to Tortoise to protect yourself from the awesome damage of that attack!

- Why this works -

So what is happening here is you are using Poison to sap him of his HP - and you are directly attacking when you can to help that along. You will not be able to attack him directly every cycle through, because some of the time you are going to have to heal.

The strategy and technique that I describe above works - it is how I completed that mission - but it does require you to know it with confidence. I had to do this fight a half dozen times before I was able to get used to the visual indicators of him shifting his attack and smoothly shift to a defensive stance, and I suspect you will have the same experience.

Keeping the Poison and Imperil on him is not optional - it is what actually kills him! So simply follow the steps and you will kill this bad boy!

Your reward is the Gold Watch and the rank 'Deliverer of Souls' as well as the satisfaction of having completed all of the Stone Missions! Even using this strategy you likely will not 5-star this - but now that you have the Gold Watch, it will be easier to 5-star... There are a lot of 5-star strategy guides online - this Walkthrough does not contain that information, and I strongly suggest that if you intend to go for the all-5-star-mission Trophy/Achievement, you get yourself a really good guide for that purpose and follow it! I have no plans to do that myself - I was happy enough just to win all 64 Missions!

Attribution and Reference

Note 1: Character Bio, Name, and background.

Some of the background information for characters was obtained from the Final Fantasy XIII Wiki (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Final_Fantasy_XIII) which includes the Japanese versions of the names. I did not include those in this guide, but if you want to view them they are available at the URL above.

Note 2: Accessory and Weapon Listing

The details of the Accessory and Weapons Listing were obtained from several different people who are hard core Final Fantasy fans and deserve credit!

Most of the Weapon listings were provided to me by GSGLENN
Most of the Accessory listings were provided to me by RUPufnstuf
Some of the Weapon Listings were provided to me by Swash01

Xbox 360 Achievements

There are 35 achievements worth a total of 1000 Gamer Score, divided between story-related achievements that you cannot miss since they are part of the story, and non-story related achievements that you can miss unless you actively pursue them.

Achievements are listed below in a logical order based on groupings for the non-story based and the order in which I unlocked them for the story-based ones. This list does not include achievements associated with DLC content, as it was created prior to the release of any DLC content.

- Story Based Achievements
- Instrument of Fate (15 GP) Took the first steps toward challenging an unjust fate
- Instrument of Dissent (15 GP) Survived the Purge to confront a greater peril
- Instrument of Tragedy (15 GP) Strode into danger's den and paid the consequences
- Instrument of Flight (15 GP) Slipped through the net and lived to fight the day
- Instrument of Vengeance (15 GP) Resolved to be more than a victim of circumstance
- Instrument of Survival (15 GP) Evaded pursuers, though memories of the past still gave chase
- Instrument of Rebellion (15 GP) Made plans to infiltrate enemy-occupied territory
- Instrument of Shame (15 GP) Carried the burden of guilt to the end of the line
- Instrument of Wrath (15 GP) Took the fight to the enemy's door
- Instrument of Truth (15 GP) Recognized the true threat to the world's future
- Instrument of Hope (15 GP) Traveled to the world below, seeking a way to alternate fate
- Instrument of Faith (30 GP) Defied destiny's charge and embarked on a different path
- Instrument of Change (95 GP) Witnessed the dawn of a new crystal legend
- Non-Story Based Achievements
- Commando's Seal (15 GP) Mastered the Commando role
- Medic's Seal (15 GP) Mastered the Medic role
- Ravager's Seal (15 GP) Mastered the Ravager role
- Saboteur's Seal (GP) Mastered the Saboteur role
- Sentinel's Seal (15 GP) Mastered the Sentinel role
- Synergist's Seal (15 GP) Mastered the Synergist role.
- Master's Seal (30 GP) Fully developed all characters
- NSB Stone Missions
- Dorgann's Trophy (30 GP) Completed all high-level Cie'th Stone missions
- Galuf's Grail (30 GP) Completed all Cie'th Stone missions
- Kelger's Cup (15 GP) Completed all low-level Cie'th Stone missions
- L'Cie Paragon (80 GP) Earned a 5-star ranking for all Cie'th Stone missions
- Xezat's Chalice (15 GP) Completed all mid-level Cie'th Stone missions
- NSB Lower World Achievements
- Adamant Will (30 GP) Felled a heavyweight of the Lower World wilds
- Exorcist (30 GP) Triumphed over undying Lower World souls in seven fierce battles
- Floraphobe (30 GP) Toppled a green terror and cut an over-sized succulent down to size
- Gysahl Wreath (15 GP) Discovered buried treasure with a little help from a chocobo
- Limit Breaker (30 GP) Dealt 100,000 damage with a single attack
- Loremaster (80 GP) Discerned the full attributes of 100 enemies
- Natural Selector (30 GP) Passed Titan's trials
- Pulsian Pioneer (15 GP) Took over 10,000 steps on the Lower World surface
- Superstar (80 GP) Earned a 5-star ranking in the battle to determine the world's fate
- Treasure Hunter (80 GP) Held every weapon and accessory

PS3 Trophies

There are 36 trophies divided between story-related trophies that you cannot miss since they are part of the story, and non-story related trophies that you can miss unless you actively pursue them.

Trophies are listed below in a logical order based on groupings for the non-story based and the order in which I unlocked them for the story-based ones. This list does not include trophies associated with DLC content, as it was created prior to the release of any DLC content.

- Story Based Trophies
- Instrument of Fate (Bronze) Took the first steps toward challenging an unjust fate
- Instrument of Dissent (Bronze) Survived the Purge to confront a greater peril
- Instrument of Tragedy (Bronze) Strode into danger's den and paid the consequences
- Instrument of Flight (Bronze) Slipped through the net and lived to fight another day
- Instrument of Vengeance (Bronze) Resolved to be more than a victim of circumstance
- Instrument of Survival (Bronze) Evaded pursuers, though memories of the past still gave chase
- Instrument of Rebellion (Bronze) Made plans to infiltrate enemy-occupied territory
- Instrument of Shame (Bronze) Carried the burden of guilt to the end of the line
- Instrument of Wrath (Bronze) Took the fight to the enemy's door
- Instrument of Truth (Bronze) Recognized the true threat to the world's future
- Instrument of Hope (Bronze) Traveled to the world below, seeking a way to alter fate
- Instrument of Faith (Silver) Defied destiny's charge and embarked on a different path
- Non-Story Based Trophies
- Commando's Seal (Bronze) Mastered the Commando role
- Medic's Seal (Bronze) Mastered the Medic role
- Ravager's Seal (Bronze) Mastered the Ravager role
- Saboteur's Seal (Bronze) Mastered the Saboteur role
- Sentinel's Seal (Bronze) Mastered the Sentinel role
- Synergist's Seal (Bronze) Mastered the Synergist role
- Master's Seal (Silver) Fully developed all characters
- Ultimate Hero (Platinum) Acquired all trophies
- NSB Stone Missions
- Dorgann's Trophy (Silver) Completed all high-level Cie'th Stone missions
- Galuf's Grail (Silver) Completed all Cie'th Stone missions
- Kelger's Cup (Bronze) Completed all low-level Cie'th Stone missions
- L'Cie Paragon (Gold) Earned a 5-star ranking for all Cie'th Stone missions
- Xezat's Chalice (Bronze) Completed all mid-level Cie'th Stone missions
- NSB Lower World Trophies
- Adamant Will (Silver) Felled a heavyweight of the Lower World wilds
- Exorcist (Silver) Triumphed over undying Lower World souls in seven fierce battles
- Floraphobe (Silver) Toppled a green terror and cut an over-sized succulent down to size
- Gysahl Wreath (Bronze) Discovered buried treasure with a little help from a chocobo
- Instrument of Change (Gold) Witnessed the dawn of a new crystal legend
- Limit Breaker (Silver) Dealt 100,000 damage with a single attack
- Loremaster (Gold) Discerned the full attributes of 100 enemies
- Natural Selector (Silver) Passed Titan's trials
- Pulsian Pioneer (Bronze) Took over 10,000 steps on the Lower World surface
- Superstar (Gold) Earned a 5-star ranking in the battle to determine the world's fate
- Treasure Hunter (Gold) Held every weapon and accessory

Treasure Hunter Achievement/Trophy

-- Achievement/Trophy: Treasure Hunter --

To unlock the Treasure Hunter Achievement/Trophy you need to "Hold every weapon and accessory" in the game. No joke, this is a tough achievement but it is worth 80 GS on the 360 and is a Gold Trophy on the 360. I know a lot of my mates have plenty of Bronze and Silver Trophies but Gold ones? Not so much. Clearly this is one of the ones you will want to actively try for as you play the game, so listen up!

You not only have to have the weapons and accessories that you can get by looting, you also have to have the ones you get through crafting - a much more daunting challenge indeed! There are some items you can get that will make this easier however, starting with Collector Catalog, which increases the frequency of Platinum drops in loot, and the Connoisseur Catalog, which increases the frequency of Dark Matters and Trapezohedrons that drop in loot. Obviously you want to keep an eye out for those accessory items to drop.

You will want to retain every ingot that you get to use in making the weapons you need to make for this, and while you do not actually have to possess ALL of the items at the same time, you do need to retain them until you can fully upgrade them - because each weapon has multiple level tiers and some of them are unique. That means if you mess up and sell one of the unique ones, you will not be able to get another like it, which means you will not be able to upgrade it, which means you will not unlock this achievement/trophy.

There are three level tiers for each weapon. which means you will not want to get rid of any weapon that is NOT a tier 3 weapon - simple enough to remember, right? Do not sell any tier 1 or 2 weapons and that will keep you from making a mistake. As for accessories, some of them are uber rare - for instance the elemental rings are basically one-offs. Sell one of those and you are hosed.

To unlock this achievement/trophy you will need to collect the following in addition to lots of ingots and lots of Gil. Each item is listed with its corresponding characteristic noted if it is a stat-affecting item (and most are).

Please see Note 2 in the [Stone Mission Guide](#)

Weapons Note: Each item listed is followed by an identification of its group and tier. Example = S1T1 translates to Sword 1, Tier 1. The tier 2 version of that sword is S2T2, etcetera.

- Weapons -

- Boomerang
- Airwing (B1T1)
- Alicanto (B8T1)
- Caladrius (B8T2)
- Eagletalon (B2T2)
- Hawkeye (B2T1)
- Hresvelgr (B5T2)
- Jatayu (B4T2)
- Malphas (B7T1)
- Naberius (B7T2)
- Ninurta (B4T1)
- Nue Caladrius (B8T3)
- Nue Eagletalon (B2T3)
- Nue Hresvelgr (B5T3)
- Nue Jatayu (B4T3)
- Nue Naberius (B7T3)
- Nue Skycutter (B1T3)
- Nue Tezcatilpoca (B6T3)
- Nue Unbutson (B3T3)
- Otshirvani (B3T1)

- Simurgh (B6T1)
- Skycutter (B1T2)
- Tezcatilpoca (B6T2)
- Unbutsin (B3T2)
- Vidofnir (B5T1)
- Coat
- Battle Standard (C4T2)
- Feral Pride (C1T2)
- Feymark (C5T1)
- Indomitus (C6T2)
- Midnight Sun (C7T2)
- Paladin (C2T1)
- Power Circle (C4T1)
- Rebel Heart (C3T1)
- Sacrificial Circle (C6T1)
- Save the Queen Battle (C4T3)
- Save the Queen Feral (C1T3)
- Save the Queen Indomitus (C6T3)
- Save the Queen Midnight (C7T3)
- Save the Queen Solaris C8T3)
- Save the Queen Soul (C5T3)
- Save the Queen Warrior (C3T3)
- Save the Queen Winged (C2T3)
- Solaris (C8T2)
- Soul Blazer (C5T2)
- Umbra (C8T1)
- Unsetting Sun (C7T1)
- Warrior's Emblem (C3T2)
- Wild Bear (C1T1)
- Winged Saint (C2T2)
- Dual Pistol
- Aldebarans (DP5T1)
- Altairs (DP1T2)
- Antares Deluxe (DP7T1)
- Betelgeuse Custom (DP82)
- Canopus AMP (DP3T2)
- Deneb Duelers (DP3T1)
- Fomalhaut Elite (DP7T2)
- Hyades Magnum (DP6T2)
- Pleiades Hi-Power (DP6T1)
- Polaris Special (DP4T2)
- Procyons (DP8T1)
- Rigels (DP4T1)
- Sadalmeliks (DP5T2)
- Sirius Sidearm (DP2T2)
- Spica Defender (DP2T1)
- Total Eclipse Altairs (DP1T3)
- Total Eclipse Betelgeuse (DP8T3)
- Total Eclipse Canopus (DP3T3)
- Total Eclipse Fomalhaut (DP7T3)
- Total Eclipse Hyades (DP6T3)
- Total Eclipse Polaris (DP4T3)
- Total Eclipse Sadalmelkis (DP5T3)
- Total Eclipse Sirius (DP2T3)
- Vega 42s (DP1T1)

- Lance
- Banescissor Spear (L5T2)
- Bladed Lance (L1T1)
- Calamity Spear (L6T2)
- Dragonhorn (L2T2)
- Dragoon Lance (L2T1)
- Gae Bolg (L8T1)
- Glave (L1T2)
- Gungnir (L8T2)
- Heretic's Halberd (L4T2)
- Kain's Lance Banescissor (L5T3)
- Kain's Lance Calamity (L6T3)
- Kain's Lance Glave (L1T3)
- Kain's Lance Gungnir (L8T3)
- Kain's Lance Dragonhorn (L2T3)
- Kain's Lance Heretic (L4T3)
- Kain's Lance Rhomphaia (L3T3)
- Kain's Lance Venus (L7T3)
- Pandoran Spear (L6T1)
- Partisan (L3T1)
- Punisher (L5T1)
- Rhomphaia (L3T2)
- Shamanic Spear (L4T1)
- Taming Pole (L7T1)
- Venus Gospel (L7T2)
- Rod
- Abraxus (R8T2)
- Belladonna Wand (R7T1)
- Binding Rod (R1T1)
- Brightwing (R4T2)
- Erinye's Cane (R6T2)
- Healer's Staff (R3T1)
- Heavenly Axis (R8T1)
- Hunter's Rod (R1T2)
- Malboro Wand (R7T2)
- Mistilteinn (R6T1)
- Nirvana Abraxus (R8T3)
- Nirvana Brightwing (R4T3)
- Nirvana Erinye (R6T3)
- Nirvana Hunter's (R1T3)
- Nirvana Malboro (R7T3)
- Nirvana Orochi (R5T3)
- Nirvana Physician (R3T3)
- Nirvana Wyrmfang (R2T3)
- Orochi Rod (R5T2)
- Pearlwing Staff (R4T1)
- Physician's Staff (R3T2)
- Rod of Thorns (R5T1)
- Tigerclaw (R2T1)
- Wyrmfang (R2T2)
- Swords
- Apocalypse (S6T2)
- Axis Blade (S2T1)
- Blazefire Saber (S1T1)
- Durandal (S7T2)

- Edged Carbine (S3T1)
- Enkindler (S2T2)
- Flameberge (S1T2)
- Gladius (S5T1)
- Hauteclaire (S7T1)
- Helter-Skelter (S5T2)
- Lifesaber (S4T1)
- Lionheart (S8T1)
- Omega Weapon Apocalypse (S6T3)
- Omega Weapon Durandal (S7T3)
- Omega Weapon Enkindler (S2T3)
- Omega Weapon Flamberge (S1T3)
- Omega Weapon Helter-Skelter (S5T3)
- Omega Weapon Peacemaker (S4T3)
- Omega Weapon Razor Carbine (S3T3)
- Omega Weapon Ultima (S8T3)
- Organyx (S6T1)
- Peacemaker (S4T2)
- Razor Carbine (S3T2)
- Ultima Weapon (S8T2)

- Accessories -

- Amulet (Varied Effects)
- Auric Amulet (Critical-Shell)
- Guardian Amulet (Critical - Protect)
- Heroes Amulet (Critical-Bravery)
- Saint's Amulet (Critical-Faith)
- Watchman's Amulet (Critical-Veil)
- Zealot's Amulet (Critical-Vigilance)
- Anklet
- Moonblow Anklet (40% Resist Daze)
- Rainbow Anklet (30% Resist Daze)
- Armband
- Ceramic Armband (40% Resist De-Protect)
- Metal Armband (30% Resist De-Protect)
- Armlets (Magical & Physical Resistance)
- Imperial Armllet (10%)
- Royal Armllet (5%)
- Bangles (Hit Points)
- Adaman Bangle (800 HP)
- Diamond Bangle (500 HP)
- Gold Bangle (250 HP)
- Iron Bangle (50 HP)
- Mithril Bangle (300 HP)
- Platinum Bangle (400 HP)
- Silver Bangle (100 HP)
- Titanium Bangle (200 HP)
- Tungsten Bangle (150 HP)
- Wurtzite Bangle (1500 HP)
- Belts (Physical Resistance)
- Black Belt (10%)
- Champion's Belt (20%)
- General's Belt (15%)
- Braces (Magical Resistance)
- Rune Brace (10%)

- Magus' Brace (20%)
- Witch's Brace (15%)
- Broach
- Aquabane Broach (Critical-Barwater)
- Flamebane Broach (Critical-Barfire)
- Frostbane Broach (Critical-Barfrost)
- Sparkbane Broach (Critical-Barthunder)
- Buckle
- Glass Buckle (30% Resist De-Faith)
- Tektite Buckle (40% Resist De-Faith)
- Cape
- Effulgent Cape (40% Resist Fog)
- White Cape (30% Resist Fog)
- Charms (Varied Effects)
- Earth Charm
- Fire Charm
- Ice Charm
- Lightning Charm
- Twenty-Sided Dice
- Water Charm
- Wind Charm
- Crests (Magical Attack)
- Magistral Crest (200)
- Crown / Tiara
- Cherub's Crown (30% Resist Death)
- Sereph's Crown (40% Resist Death)
- Tetratic Crown (Critical-Tetradefense)
- Tetratic Tiara (Auto-Tetradefense)
- Dampener
- Pain Dampener (30% Resist Pain)
- Deflector
- Pain Deflector (40% Resist Pain)
- Earring (Varied Effects)
- Aquashield Earring (Auto-Barwater)
- Flameshield Earring (Auto-Barfire)
- Frostshield Earring (Auto-Barfrost)
- Sparkshield Earring (Auto-Barthunder)
- Elemental Rings (Elemental Resistance)
- Aqua Ring (20% Water)
- Blaze Ring (25% Fire)
- Boreal Ring (30% Ice)
- Clay Ring (20% Earth)
- Ember Ring (20% Fire)
- Frost Ring (20% Ice)
- Fulmen Ring (25% Thunder)
- Gaian Ring (30% Earth)
- Gale (25% Wind)
- Icicle Ring (25% Ice)
- Nereid Stream Ring (30% Water)
- Raijin Ring (30% Thunder)
- Riptide Ring (25% Water)
- Salamander Ring (30% Fire)
- Siltstone Ring (25% Earth)
- Spark Ring (20% Thunder)
- Sylphid Ring (30% Wind)

- Zephyr Ring (20% Wind)
- Feet
- Hermes Sandals (Critical-Haste)
- Nimbletoe Boots (Improved Evasion)
- Sprint Shoes (Auto-Haste)
- Gloves / Hands (Varied Effects)
- Giant's Glove (30% Resist De-Bravery)
- Kaiser Knuckles (200 Physical Attack)
- Power Gloves (150 Physical Attack)
- Warlord's Glove (40% Resist De-Bravery)
- Glyphs (Magical Attack)
- Weirding Glyph (150)
- Marks (Magical Attack)
- Magician's Mark (20)fdcz43e4
- Shaman's Mark (50)
- Sorcerer's Mark (100)
- Misc
- Aurora Scarf (ATB)
- Collector's Catalog (Spoils)
- Connoisseur Catalog (Spoils)
- Doctor's Code (Improved Potions)
- Energy Sash (TB)
- Entite Ring (10 Elemental Resist)
- Genji Gauntlet (Limit Break)
- Goddess' Favor (Rapid Recovery)
- Gold Watch (Time Stretch)
- Grow Egg (2x CP)
- Hunter's Friend (Kill-Libra)
- Ribbon (20% Resilience)
- Speed Sash (ATB)
- Super Ribbon (25% Resilience)
- Survivalist Catalog (Shroud Spoils)
- Whistlewind Scarf (1 ATB)
- Winner's Medal (TB)
- Necklace
- Gemstone Necklace (40% Resist Weak)
- Pearl Necklace (30% Resist Weak)
- Orb
- Dragonfly Orb (40% Resist Slow)
- Glass Orb (30% Resist Slow)
- Pendant
- Star Pendant (30% Resist Bio)
- Starfall Pendant 40% Resist Bio)
- Sachet
- Safeguard Sachet (40% Resist De-Shell)
- Serenity Sachet (30% Resist De-Shell)
- Talisman (Varied Effects)
- Battle Talisman (Auto-Vigilance)
- Blessed Talisman (Auto-Faith)
- Hexbane Talisman (40% Resist Curse)
- Morale Talisman (Auto-Bravery)
- Shield Talisman (Auto-Protect)
- Shrouding Talisman (Auto-Veil)
- Soulfront Talisman (Auto-Shell)
- Warding Talisman (30% Resist Curse)

- Wristbands (Physical Attack)
- Brawler's Wristband (50)
- Power Wristband (20)
- Warrior's Wristband (100)

To sum it up, you need to have possessed each weapon and accessory, and you need to have upgraded each to their maximum tier. Most of these drop as treasure or loot, but some have to be purchased. And that is all that there is to say about that!

Frequently Asked Questions

The following are questions that I was asked by mates on my Friend List and players in the Clan I play with along with the answers to them. These are restricted to information that you need, and as I will not be editing this list after publication, any questions that you ask via email - while I will make every effort to answer - will likely not be appearing in this list.

Q1. How do you unlock the Gamer Pictures? (XBox 360)

A1. Gamer Pictures are unlocked by completing specific Achievements. To access these after unlocking them select Extras Mode from the Main Menu of the game. They unlockable pictures and the associated achievements are:

- Hope Estheim (Hopu Esutohaimu) - Instrument of Change Achievement
- Lightning (Raitoningu) - Superstar Achievement
- Oerba Dia Vanille (Oruba-Daia Vanira) - Instrument of Faith Achievement
- Oerba Yun Fang (Oruba-Yun Fangu) - Treasure Hunter Achievement
- Sazh Katzroy (Sazzu Kattsuroi) - Lore Master Achievement
- Serah Farron (Sera Faron) - All Achievements
- Snow Villiers (Suno Viriasu) - L'Cie Paragon Achievement

To see what the Gamer Pictures look like, visit the Gamer Pictures Site at <http://gamer-pics.com/final-fantasy-xiii/> for a preview of each.

Q2. How do you unlock Themes? (PS3)

A2. Themes are unlocked by gaining specific Trophies. The unlockable Themes and the associated trophies are:

- Hope Estheim (Hopu Esutohaimu) - Instrument of Change Trophy
- Lightning (Raitoningu) - Superstar Trophy
- Oerba Dia Vanille (Oruba-Daia Vanira) - Instrument of Faith Trophy
- Oerba Yun Fang (Oruba-Yun Fangu) - Treasure Hunter Trophy
- Sazh Katzroy (Sazzu Kattsuroi) - Lore Master Trophy
- Serah Farron (Sera Faron) - Ultimate Hero Trophy
- Snow Villiers (Suno Viriasu) - L'Cie Paragon Trophy

Q3. What components should be used to upgrade my kit?

A3. The simple answer is any - the complicated answer is that while you can use any to upgrade, you should never use a component that says in its description "This can be sold for a premium" because those components are worth WAY more selling for Gil than for upgrading.

When you are upgrading make sure that you save before major upgrades so that if you end up using a high value component worth more than the actual cost of the cap upgrade you can back off and use something else. There is no sense in spending 500 EXP to cap an item that only requires 30 EXP.

Another note - some items add X multipliers - you will need to experiment with them to learn which. Obviously you want to make strategic use of those items.

Q4. When should I start farming Gil? / Where should I farm Gil?

A4. First this is not a simple question because you should always combine farming Gil with grinding CP. Having said that, you really should not worry about serious farming until after Chapter 10 as that is where you get more convenient groups and most of your jobs are unlocked. What that translates to is that after Chapter 10 you will be

doing serious grinding *anyway* so you might as well combine that with farming Gil!

Right! So now to the question of where - believe it or not this is not as important as how. How is simple enough - you want to get 5-star battles each time, because the number of stars you get for each battle has a direct relation to what you get in spoils - or perhaps what your chances are of getting good loot is a better way to say it.

Before you start any serious farming you are going to want to have the Collector's and the Connoisseur's Catalogs in your possession first, and as both are obtained in Chapter 11 - you should start to see the logic here.

As far as the best farming spots, according to the consensus on the boards, Eden Hall and the Orphan's Chamber are the best places for farming. YMMV.

Q5. I cannot upgrade this job/weapon/accessory! What gives?!

A5. This game is a little different than the other games in the series in that the ability to upgrade jobs is really based on how far into the game you have gotten. You do not even unlock most of the jobs until late in the game anyway, and if you think about it this is a good thing, as otherwise to keep them all capped off you would spend more time grinding CP than playing the game!

Try not to stress on your levels - your jobs (if you keep them capped) are completely appropriate for each area, and you will be able to raise job levels when you need to. It really is that simple!

As for upgrading kit - this is something you really need to put some study in to before you start doing it anyway! Sure, it can be as simple as plowing through your resources until you get each of the items you want upgraded to their cap, but doing that will actually cost you XP points because some of the resources are simply better used strategically.

I strongly recommend that you read one of the many upgrade guides online! The subject is simply too complex to be included as a section of this walkthrough and you will be better served by consulting a featured upgrade guide. I may end up writing one but if I do it will be in addition to this guide and not part of it!

SuperCheats.com Unofficial Guide to Final Fantasy XIII Demo

by Absolute Steve



Thirteen centuries. It has been a long time since the prophecy of Cocoon was fulfilled. Final Fantasy XIII's plot centres around the world of Pulse.

Thirteen centuries ago, a mysterious crystal told the fal'Cie - one of the races living on Pulse - that they had to establish a paradise for humanity. Cocoon, as this paradise was called, resides high in the sky and is now an advanced technological place where outsiders from the world of Pulse are not welcome. It is here where Lightning, a beautiful girl living in the world of Pulse, seems to be looking for justice.

Many of us have been waiting for years until they could finally get their hands on what might be the most anticipated game EVER. It's time to dive into what what looks to become one hell of an epic adventure later on. Experience the game to its fullest with this Guide that will cover every aspect.

While my first Guides were not for Final Fantasy games, it were my Guides for this series that really got me into Guide writing. For the foreseeable future, Final Fantasy XIII will be my last project, and I will leave no stone unturned until all mechanics, all "perfect game notes" and everything else is complete and perfected. I'll give 100% of my potential in order to deliver you what hopefully will become the greatest gaming experience of all time.

This is a Guide for the Demo Version of the game, but I'm sure you already knew that. The FFXIII Demo came packaged with the Final Fantasy VII: Advent Children Complete Blu-ray first print edition, and also with the Japanese PS3 bundle that featured the movie. In case anyone is wondering, no, the Demo can unfortunately not be acquired through any other means at this time.

Good news for European gamers: Both the Blu-ray movie disc, as well as the Trial Version Disc for FFXIII can be played on PAL PS3's. Even better news is that although the movie is Japanese, an option for English Voice overs is

available! Simply go to Setup, select Sound, and highlight the right option to view the movie in English.

Enough already. Let's dive into this game with the speed of Lightning!

Final Fantasy XIII Demo Walkthrough

Opening Scene and Battle Demo

```
--- OPENING SCENE TRANSLATION: -----  
|Vanilla: The thirteen days after we awoke were the beginning of the end.  
|  
|Sazh: "Seriously?"  
|Lightning: "Be quiet."  
|Sazh: "I'm counting on you."  
|  
|[Sazh runs over to a boy.]  
|  
|Sazh: "Are you okay?"  
|Sazh: "I'm not a l'Cie."  
|  
|[Lightning kills a few more PSICOM soldiers.]  
|  
|Sazh: "Guess everything worked out."  
|Sazh: "Everyone wants to fight."  
|Lightning: "You'll slow me down."  
|  
|[The train is seen entering the citadel of Cocoon where warfare is going on.]  
|  
|Lightning: "Get out of the way."  
|  
|[A large robotic creature attacks the train.]  
|  
|Sazh: "Let's get outta here!"  
|Sazh: "Not that way!"  
|  
|Sazh: "Hey, hey, hey. You gotta be kidding!"  
|Sazh: "Give me a break! What will we do!?"  
|Lightning: "Stay there and watch."  
|  
|[A Tutorial fight starts.]  
-----
```

After a visually stunning opening cutscene the game kicks off with a boss fight. This battle is meant to introduce the game's battle system to the player. Let's go over this system first.

The battle interface looks roughly as outlined below:

Choose a weapon to attack

----- ? HELP -----

(=====)

ACTION

(Skill)	Lightning	720 (HP)
(Black Magic)	Sahz	620 (HP)
(White Magic)		

COMMAND SYNERGY BATTLE

[The tutorial of basic battle controls.]

[You'll enter real time once in battle. Time flows depending on the time gauge.]

[Next, choose your target. Use the left and right direction keys to choose your target. There is only one enemy now, so you just need to press the O button!]

[Once the target is decided, choose the attack command. You can use only one command, but at most you can stock three multiple commands.]

[The numbers beside the commands represent the time that they take. Please be cautious as powerful skills need more time. There is an unlimited amount of different combinations between continuous, but less powerful skills, or a one-hit-ko.]

[Let's try stocking the commands. Choose the commands by pressing the direction keys. Stock the command by pressing the O button.]

[Take action of the stocked commands by pressing the triangle button, then let's try battling!]

[Triangle: Command Action]

[Attack] [Launch]

[Fire] [Firaga]

[Cure]

Final Fantasy XIII Demo Walkthrough

Boss Fight: Aerial Robot Scorpion

BOSS FIGHT: AERIAL ROBOT SCORPION	
ATTACKS:	
Razor Swipe [20 Damage, Physical]	
Tail Laser [50 Damage, Physical]	
Laser Beam [275 Damage, Physical, Phase 2 Only]	
BASIC STATISTICS:	
HP: 1500 (Phase 1)	Being the game's first boss, it certainly doesn't pose
HP: 1900 (Phase 2)	that much of a threat than its dangerous appearance might
Weakness: ???	trick you in thinking.
	The battle consists of two phases. In the first, the boss
	only attacks with its swipe attack (~20 Damage) or its
	Tail Laser attack (~50 Damage), both fairly weak attacks.
	Physical Attacks work best against the boss, and will
	definitely inflict the most damage. Sazh also pummels the
	boss, but he's a much better healer, and his physical
	attacks inflict neglectable damage.
	The boss gains access to a powerful Laser Beam attack in
	the second phase of battle, and this inflicts a solid 275
	Damage on both Lightning and Sazh. Pound the boss with
	more physical attacks while Sazh focuses on healing, and
	it'll go down in no time. Don't bother using the Launch
	command, as it doesn't work against the boss.

This video showcases the very first boss – heck, the very first fight of the game!

CUTSCENE BETWEEN BATTLES TRANSLATION:	
Lightning:	"Retreat!"
Sazh:	"Having some trouble?!"
Sazh:	"N-no need to get mad..."
Lightning:	"Jump!"
Lightning:	"It's coming."
Sazh:	"C'mon.. cut me some slack."

After the battle you get to view the battle results screen, as outlined below:

BATTLE RESULTS

_____ STATS ___/

Battle Time 00:02:13
Maximum Chain Combo.....25
Break.....1

RANK _____

() () () () () [Stars]

TP BONUS 0

.-- CUTSCENE AFTER BATTLE TRANSLATION: -----
|Sazh: "Phew..! You did it!"
|Sazh: "If you're a soldier then protect the citizens alright?!"
|Sazh: "Aren't you with the army? Why don't you tell me something?"
|Sazh: Like why you're going up against Purge..."
|Lightning: "..I left the army."
|Sazh: "Hey, wait up!"
|Sazh: "Daddy's getting left behind.."
|Sazh: "Hey, there's no path! Don't tell me that I have to walk down this way!"
Ugh!"

Final Fantasy XIII Demo Walkthrough

Camera Settings

This is a simple tutorial about the Camera Settings. Let's go over the options:

1. Y-Axis = Inverted, X-Axis = Not Inverted.
2. Y-Axis = Inverted, X-Axis = Inverted.
3. Y-Axis = Not Inverted, X-Axis = Not Inverted.
4. Y-Axis = Not Inverted, X-Axis = Inverted.

Just remember that Y-Axis is the vertical controlment of the camera, and X-Axis is the horizontal. As for the controls being inverted or not, if you press the right stick up and it does the opposite thing (down) then it's inverted. If it does exactly what you press then it's not inverted. Sounds simple, is simple.

Note: Many games initially start out with option 3. It's likely you will get the most natural feeling if you thus select option 3.

Final Fantasy XIII Demo Walkthrough

Demo Continues

This video shows off the first semi-random encounters in-game

Follow the straight walkway until you reach two PSICOM soldiers. Naturally, as one of the first enemies you encounter, these foes are far from challenging, and killing them won't be a problem. Try to chain attacks on them for better battle results.

After you're victorious, ignore what seems to be one of the spawn pods from which creatures were summoned earlier in the opening scene and proceed up to the destroyed end of the walkway. Stand on the circular highlights and jump over the rubbish.

Next up are a few more battles with respectively 2 and 3 PSICOM soldiers. After beating them, jump over another destroyed pile of walkway and approach a rather futuristic treasure "chest" in the form of a floating orb. This gives you [100 of something].

NOTE: After both Lightning and Sazh have jumped over the second destroyed pile of rubbish, it is possible to backtrack and continuously fight the groups of three and two PSICOM soldiers respectively.

Continue and you'll get to view a short scene.

```

--- TRANSLATION: -----
Sazh: "Even if it's for resisting Purge, don't you think it's too much for amateurs
to pick fight with the Sanctum?"
Lightning: "What's worse than Purge is Pulse. The Underworld is hell after all."
Sazh: "Hell, huh.. Well, this place isn't all that different either."
Lightning: "They're army-trained hounds. They're not a hassle."
Sazh: "Well that may be the case for you but.. Hey!"
-----

```

The demo continues and introduces a new type of hound enemy

This battle is slightly tougher than the previous battles, but the difference is only marginal. The dogs will last longer, but they're no match for Lightning and Sazh. Continue over the walkway and leap over several containers. Another encounter takes place, this time with a regular soldier and a PSICOM unit with a jetpack. After finishing them, backtrack by the southwestern stairs to find a treasure that holds [300 of something].

Next, jump over several more containers, head up the stairs and jump back down at the end of the catwalk. Three more PSICOM units are dropped by a spacecraft, so ready your sword and initiate combat. A scene follows after the fight comes to a conclusion and running past the northern containers.

```

--- TRANSLATION: -----
Lightning: "Let's attack first."
Enemy: "Rebels!"
Enemy: "No choice but to fight."
-----

```

Fight off the aggressors (a PSICOM soldier and hound), then watch another scene.

```

--- TRANSLATION: -----
Sazh: "Let's head back!"
Lightning: "There's no time."
Sazh: "What're we gonna do!?"
-----

```

Lightning: "Be quiet."
Sazh: "Hey... Hold it! Wait! Don't leave me behind!"
Lightning: "Let go of me!"
Sazh: "You know, I have no choice but to stick with you!"
Sazh: "We.. can ride that!"
Lightning: "Apparently so."

This video includes a battle with a much tougher enemy, a PSICOM Officer

As you proceed south another batch of three hounds and a PSICOM soldier assault you. Finish them, and backtrack south if you want to encounter another three PSICOM soldiers (this is also a re-spawnable encounter: Simply move back and forth past the containers to re-spawn them). Head back to the stairs that Sazh ran up and inspect the treasure device. Now hop onto the platform and activate the panel to ride the platform across an other walkway. Move a little north to initiate a scene.

--- TRANSLATION: -----
Officer: "People that were part of the Purge? Drop your weapons. You'll be treated with courtesy."
Sazh: "With courtesy?"
Lightning: "Perhaps he means they'll let us die comfortably."
Officer: "Too late!"

You'll have to fight the PSICOM Officer and two regular PSICOM soldiers. Dispose of the soldiers, then start dealing damage to the Officer. His strength is considerably greater than that of regular soldiers, so when your HP gets low (note that this is displayed in yellow), be sure to issue a cure command on Lightning and Sazh.

--- TRANSLATION: -----
Sazh: So, uhm.. What exactly are we looking for? Army secrets? Come on... It's okay now, isn't it? You've left the army, right? Who cares if you speak.."
Lightning: "A fal'Cie from Pulse. Our goal is a fal'Cie from Pulse."
Lightning: "It was your mistake for coming with me."
Sazh: "..Not entirely."

A different cutscene plays.

Continue the demo as a new hero that goes by the name of Snow Villiers!

--- TRANSLATION: -----
Voiceover: [...]
Voiceover: "I'd like to express out heartfelt gratitude."
Voiceover: "Were it not for this patriotic gesture, every resident of Cocoon..."
Voiceover: "...your family, your friends, your neighbors..."
Voiceover: "...would be exposed to the dangers of the world below." [...]
Yuge: "Immigration? More like killing all the-" Snow: "Yuge." Snow: "Stay here with the rest."
Yuge: "...I'm sorry... I couldn't be of much help..."

Snow: "Stay here and protect everyone!"
Snow: "If you stay sharp, everyone can ease down. Right?"
Yuge: "Yeah..."
Snow: "We, the Nora are?"
Yuge: "S-stronger than the army!"
Snow: "That's the spirit!"

Grab the treasure directly located behind you and proceed through the area. If you walk nearby people they will automatically speak to you. [I could really use some translation help here - if anyone could be so kind?] Another scene plays as you proceed to the next area.

--- TRANSLATION: -----
Maqui: "This is too hard for me!"
Gadot: "Then sit back and relax."
Maqui: "I can do that?"
Gadot: "But if we go down, it's your job to save everyone by yourself."
Maqui: "That just makes it harder!"
Snow: "Then let's become heroes together!"
Snow: "We're up against PSICOM! The best the Sanctum's got!"
Lebreau: "The best? PSICOMs are only up there for looks you know."
Gadot: "We are the heroes after all!"
Snow: "Charge!"

Up next is a battle with two PSICOM soldiers, and you're assisted by Gadot and Lebreau. As with Sazh, you cannot control them and you only use Snow. Proceed down the walkway and fight off another group of three PSICOM soldiers. Shortly after proceeding, another cutscene plays.

--- TRANSLATION: -----
Maqui: "This is too hard."
Lebreau: "Oh great... Enemies all over."
Gadot: "So leader, what's the plan?"
Snow: "Charge and pound!"
Maqui: "But that's not even an actual plan..."
Lebreau: "But heroes win no matter what!"

Two PSICOM soldiers and two hounds rush over to Snow & Co. Beat them and proceed down the walkway. You'll encounter a few more enemy groups: 2 PSICOM soldiers, and a tougher group with 3 hounds and 1 jetpack PSICOM soldier. Approach the civilians at the end of the walkway to initiate another scene.

--- TRANSLATION: -----
Snow: "Everyone alright?"
Snow: "What are you doing..?"
Maqui: "..Ehehehe."
Snow: "Don't worry, no one's moving to the Underworld (Pulse) today." Snow: "We'll do something about this... We'll clear a path to-" Man: "I'm fighting with you!"
fal'Cie Prisoner: "You can't expect us to just sit here!" Snow: "Well..."

Man: "C'mon, let us do this!"
 Snow: "...Okay then. Volunteers front and center."
 Maqui: "Here."
 Female fal'Cie Prisoner: "Mom?"
 Blonde Female: "...Don't worry."
 Snow: "You sure?"
 Blonde Female: "Mothers are strong."
 Snow: "Alright!"
 Gadot: "Last one here"
 Snow: "We'll leave this one behind. Can someone hold onto it?"
 Vanille: "Okay!"
 Snow: "If something ever happens... Then you know what to do."
 Vanille: "Bang!"
 Snow: "Oeff."
 Snow: "You guys will be safe as long as you stay hidden. We'll clean this up in no time."
 Lebreau: "I'll stay here."
 Snow: "We're going home together."
 Lebreau: "Come on everyone, stand up!"
 Gadot: "Alright, let's go! Follow me!"
 Lebreau: "Here, come with me."

The demo concludes with a fierce battle against a Behemoth!

First of all, turn around and look behind a container to find a chest that contains [1000 of something].

Fight off the group of 4 PSICOM soldiers, then continue down the walkway and you'll encounter a group of two hounds and two PSICOM soldiers. It's possible to avoid this encounter by simply rushing through the middle. The encounter with two jetpack PSICOM soldiers cannot be avoided, however. Enter the next area, or defeat both groups of enemies - it's up to you.

--- TRANSLATION: -----

PSICOM Soldier: Report suppression division! Eliminate the resistors!"
 Snow: "Running won't make us heroes!"

A large hound appears and the boss battle starts, along with a new battle theme, presumably the boss battle theme. The boss has a slash and a horn attack, the latter being more powerful to one target than the other. You'll want to pick up the pace and keep pounding the creature with physical attacks. If you attack at regular intervals (one or two attacks, after which Snow automatically steps back again) the creature will miss you a lot with its claw swipes. If you're good, you can even win this battle without getting hit even once!

It's important to note that if Snow dies, it'll be Game Over. The creature's horn attack is particularly annoying at times, and will usually inflict 700 damage - needless to say, a LOT. If you manage to attack the creature, the fortunate event in which Snow retreats while the hound tries to horn him - and missing him - will often occur. It's still possible that you get hit by this horn attack. Depending on whether the boss is almost dead, make a choice between healing or quickly finishing it off.

.-- TRANSLATION: -----

|Gadot: "This is bad!" |

| Snow: "Stay down!"
| Blonde Mother: "I told you."
| Blonde Mother: "Mothers are strong."
| Snow: "This isn't happening... Hey!"
| Blonde Mother: "Look after... my son..."
| Snow: "Hang on!"
|
| Voice Over: "Attention Purge qualifiers, attention Purge qualifiers!"
| Voice Over: "Stop the meaningless fighting now, and surrender at once."
| Voice Over: "The world wishes for justice upon the Underworld (Pulse)."
| Voice Over: "Even if you manage to escape this area, the Sanctum army will use
| to track down every single one of you."
| Voice Over: "There is no place in Cocoon for beings of the likes of you.
| Surrender immediately."
|
| Snow: "Serah..."
|
| Sazh: "That must be what you've been looking for."
| Lightning: "Yeah. ...It's in there."
| Sazh: "Pulse's fal'Cie, hmm?"
|
Vanille: "The Pulse's fal'Cie... It's where we'll meet our fate."

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Characters

Lightning (Dia Walruva):

Lightning is the codename of the main character of FFXIII. She has been described by Tetsuya Nomura as a feminine version of FFVII's Cloud Strife, and he added that she isn't all that feminine. She is an l'Cie, and has been chosen by the Crystal(s) as the enemy of humanity who will bring about the downfall of the world. Apparently she had been working for an organization of some sorts, and after a yet unknown event she was regarded as a threat for Cocoon.

Lightning doesn't know her real name, but it is assumed she will find out somewhere along the game. As for battle related information, Lightning uses a Gunblade-like sword that can swiftly transform between a sword form and a gun form. Lightning also makes use of an anti-gravity device, but specifics regarding this device are still unknown.

Snow Villiers:

Snow was originally known as Mr. 33cm, which - fortunately - referred to his shoe size, not .. something else. He has blonde hair, a bandanna and a long grey coat that reminds FFXIII-players of Seifer's. Snow has been seen riding a Shiva motorcycle which consists out of a twin-sister Shiva incarnation. Presumably it is this summon that can also be recognized in FFXIII's logo.

Snow lets his fists do the talking. Being a big guy, it is rumored he is so strong, he can even carry two people and run around with them. Snow is stronger than Lightning, whereas she is more agile.

Oerba Dia Vanille:

She is an l'Cie as well. Not much information has been revealed about her. Vanille has been described as a cheerful, optimistic character. She has long, red hair and a pigtail.

Sazh Katzroy:

The green-coated, afro-headed, comic-relief black guy of this instalment! He is a friend of Lightning although he questions her actions at the start of the game. One of his trademarks is the little Chocobo (Chicobo, perhaps?) that lives in his afro. Sazh helps Lightning during battles in the demo, but he cannot be controlled (at this time). He wields guns and uses long ranged shot attacks against enemies.

Team Nora

This team exists out of Lebreau (the beautiful brunette), Gadot (the orange haired, gun-wielding hotshot), and Maqui, who could be either a boy or a girl judging by his/her looks. They seem to be a typical support cast and it's unlikely that they'll become part of the main cast.

Gadot and Lebreau have been described as childhood friends of Snow, while Maqui has been characterized as joining Team Nora because he looks up to Snow and wants to be just like him.

Summons:

So far, the following summons have been recognized in trailers:

- Shiva
- Ifrit
- Siren
- Carbuncle

Final Fantasy XIII Demo Guide

Trailer Transcript

The thirteen days after we awoke...
were the beginning of the end.

That's how a Focus comes down.

"Go there, do this" ain't exactly the way a fal'Cie operates.

How do we complete a Focus we don't even know?

I think I dreamt it.

Don't worry, no one's moving to Pulse today.

We'll clear you a path to...

I'm fightin' with you!

You can't expect us just to sit here!

Okay then. Volunteers front and center.

I'd like to express out heartfelt gratitude.

Were it not for this patriotic gesture, every resident of Cocoon... your family, your friends, your neighbors... would be exposed to the dangers of the world below.

We're fighting PSICOM! The best the Sanctum's got.

These are their best? They're no match for us.

It was Serah. She saved us!

Serah? Maybe you forgot, but thanks to you, Serah's...

That was a l'Cie's power!

The fal'Cie cursed us. We're l'Cie now!