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# Dive

## Chapter 2 - Progress

"Morning, Nam!"

"Morning, Evelyn."

"You slept a lot. You must have been tired."

"Yes. Because you played with my body in a very pleasant manner until late last night."

"NAM! You could have mentioned your exhausting mining trip first!"

"No, mining wasn't so bad. But when you played with my..."

"Alright, alright! Enough. Look... I got 734 points now."

"So you can spawn the Building core item, then."

"Yes, get up. Let's go try it now."

"Okay."

I helped Nam up and went searching for an appropriate place to spawn the building core item. Who knew how big this thing would be or what it was supposed to do once deployed. I liked our current location in the little forest clearing, but it would be better to do this test somewhere else in case I were to mess up.

We walked back to the frozen lake near the snowy mountains where I had started my journey. There was a nice area around there that would be big enough for our needs. We brought the warm blanket with us because of how cold it was today. Our bikini armors, no matter how good-looking they were, were still a major inconvenience.

"There... This looks like a good place. What do you think?"

"I think so."

"So, are you sure you don't know anything about building cores, Nam?"

"I'm your assistant, not an encyclopedia."

"Right... What did I expect? Step back. I don't want you to get crushed by something heavy."

"Okay."

I opened my inventory and looked at my building core object one last time. Having to do unthinkable things to obtain my points, it was kind of heartbreaking to spend 500 of them on something I knew nothing about. Yet, it was my best bet if I wanted to make progress in Dive and, hopefully, find a way out.

After a deep breath in, I dragged the building core in front of me and released it. A small luminous cube spawned... Unfortunately, it was not even three inches in diameter, and it just fell boringly onto the ground as if I had thrown a dice while playing a bad board game. It was unimpressive at best.

"What? Stupid game! What is this? Did I just waste 500 points?"

"Mmm... It probably serves a purpose."

"Nam, I told you to stay back."

Instead of keeping her distance, my assistant was right next to me, wrapped in her warm blanket. She crouched down to pick the small cube up and double-tapped it to open the status screen.

"It looks like you have to select what it will turn into."

"Oh... What are the options?"

"Log cabin, stockpile, or granary."

"That's it?"

"Yes."

"Well, the cabin would definitely be nice to have."

"Which one?"

"What do you mean?"

"Look, you can choose from different models. They all come with a small wood stove, but there are different sizes. The bigger you go, the more material you will need to build it."

I looked at the different pictures, the bigger ones looked better, but I was an absolute beginner. I didn't want to go too big and paint myself in a corner. Based on what Nam said, we would need material like wood to build it, and I really didn't have a lot of that.

"Let's go with the smallest one, Nam. I'm sure we can upgrade it later if needs be."

"Sure, where do you want it? Look at the green line around us. It seems to be the space it requires."

"Mmm, a view over the lake and the mountain will be nice. Let's put it over there."

After selecting the right cabin and confirming with me, Nam placed the cube where I told her to. A home would be a game-changer if it worked.

"I assume we have to bring the material here and place it inside the green area?"

"Possibly. I've never built anything before. For this one, you need 40 woods and 10 stones."

"Sounds like a project. Nam, go mine some more stone, and I'll start carrying some wood back over here. Take the blanket with you this time. I will spawn another one for myself."

"Thank you, Evelyn."

If I could avoid spending unnecessary points on extra items, I would not mind, but there was no way I would send Nam out there again without something to keep her healthy, particularly when the temperature was biting like today.

I went to my inventory to spawn an extra blanket and headed toward where my woodpile was. It would take several round trips to bring all that wood back over here, and that was assuming it wouldn't magically return to my woodpile like it did yesterday.

It only took me a few minutes to reach my woodpile and determine that I could safely carry two planks at once. Since we had all day to do this, I preferred not to rush; not knowing if breaking a bone was a thing in this game, I chose to avoid getting hurt because I tried to carry too much.

When I arrived back at my log cabin area, I nervously placed my two planks on the ground within the green markers... and they stayed.

"Well, look at that... It seems that I'm building something, after all. It took me long enough."

The rest of the morning consisted of carrying wood and keeping an eye on my resource count to see if Nam was making progress on her side. At the pace she was going, it would take a while, but I would not pressure her. Mining was probably hard, and since it was cold, she would have to take several warm-up breaks.

Once I finished my part, I sat next to the lake, cocooned in my warm blanket, and waited for Nam to show up. From what I could see, she had mined enough stone, some more iron, and even one unit of copper. Since my resources weren't going up anymore, it was fair to assume that she was on her way back or maybe just taking a nap.

Another thing I noticed while browsing my interface that a whole bunch of items ready to be unlocked appeared in my list; some new tools, some furniture for the house, and even some decoration. That said, I didn't have a smile on my face; first, everything was so expensive, and second, there were still no new clothing items for us to wear.

While I swore at the game, I heard some little footsteps approaching; Nam had brought two stones for the new cabin.

"Hey, you're back!"

"Yes, I will go collect the rest in a bit, but I'm a little bit tired."

"Come here and take a little nap. I'm sure mining was demanding. We still have plenty of time before the end of the day."

"Okay."

Being nice to Nam was the least I could do after sending her mining alone without a blanket yesterday. And this morning, she was actually useful when she took on herself to inspect the building core and help me understand it. We were both stuck in this world, so there was no point in not being kind to each other.

I opened my blanket, let her sit next to me, and wrapped my arm around her shoulders; she was so cold again.

"There, just close your eyes and rest for a bit."

"Thank you, Evelyn."

As she slowly drifted away, I played with her blue hair; her color and mine would be tricky to replicate in real life, but I thought it was pretty. Most people where I lived were old and didn't dye their hair unless it was to hide their grey. Mind you, at twenty-four years old, and I wasn't dying my hair either, probably due to a lack of guts on my part.

This fictional world was doing a good job at rejecting normality; those bikini armors were acceptable as a daily outfit, those fancy hair colors were just cool, having to kiss a person of the same sex to get points, nobody minded. As Nam told me several times so far, Valhalla is MY world, and I could do whatever I wanted with it. I should take this opportunity to enjoy those things that were unusual to me.

"Heeey, what are you..."

While I was thinking about these random things, Nam slid off my shoulder, and her head landed on my lap; she was definitely asleep now.

Since I didn't have a mirror, I didn't know what I looked like in this world yet. I knew my body had thinned down and that my curves accentuated, but it would have been nice to take a look at my face. The picture in my profile wasn't big enough to give me a precise idea. Perhaps I looked just like Nam; we were wearing the same outfit after all, and we seemed to be the same size too.

I looked at her, sleeping, and found her very pretty. Because of her flawless skin, she almost looked like a doll. But above all else, she looked gentle and friendly. This ornate metal headband suited her so much; she definitely had the face of a warrior princess from a fairy tale.

I decided to close my eyes as well and accompany her to dreamland.

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"Mmm..."

"Evelyn! Evelyn! Wake up. A big storm is coming."

"Mmm... A storm?"

"Yes, look, over there."

"Holy crap... Those clouds are terrifying. Okay, let's hurry. We need those stones to finish our cabin."

"We won't have time."

"Well, we don't have a choice. Let's go..."

This was unexpected. It was all sunny before I closed my eyes, and now this apocalyptic snowstorm rolled toward our position. The weather in this world was absolutely unpredictable.

Nam and I jogged back to her mining site. Since I had never been there, I didn't know how far it was exactly, but she was probably right, and there was no way we could bring all the stones back before the storm hit. She already had brought two stones to the cabin site, which meant that we could only bring back four more on this trip, and we would have to return for the remaining four that we needed to complete the house.

Before we arrived at the mining site, the wind kicked in, and the snow already started falling. It was nothing like the first storm I experienced when I arrived in Valhalla; this one was much more ominous. The snowflakes hitting me at high velocity felt like needles on my naked skin. In our rush, we didn't even think about bringing our blankets to protect ourselves; I would have to sacrifice another 5 points if the weather got worse.

"There, Evelyn... The stones are there."

"Gotcha!"

At the foot of a small rocky cliff, I could see where Nam had mined; there was a neat pile of stones, iron, and copper ore. In a hurry, we collected two stones each and made our way back to the cabin site. But we had a new problem; our footprints in the snow were fading quickly because of the strong wind. I trusted Nam to guide me, but she seemed to struggle as much as I did.

"NAM! What the hell is wrong with the weather? Why is it so violent?"

"I don't know! But we are in trouble."

"Can you find our way back?"

"Yes, I think so. We are not far."

During the game setup, I selected random weather... I guess I was paying the price for my laziness. My almost naked body burned from the sharp ice pellets, and there was nothing I could do to prevent it. As soon as we would arrive at our campsite, it would be blanket time for sure.

A few more minutes of icy torture allowed us to reach our destination. We dropped our stones in the highlighted area and began searching for our precious blankets that we had mistakenly left behind. Unfortunately, they had either flown away because of the wind or got buried in the accumulating snow. Since I didn't want to waste any more time, I spawned a new one. For the first time, I was happy to have spent some extra time massaging Nam's boobs to get points.

Sadly, as soon as the new blanket appeared, a big wind gust took it away high in the sky before we could even grab it.

"Ah! Damnit! Five points wasted. I'll spawn another one. Try to catch it this time, Nam!"

"No... It's getting worse... the blanket won't be enough. We need the cabin, or else we are going to die. This is a level 5 storm. The blanket won't be enough to survive this time."

"How... How do you know that, Nam?"

"I... I... Nevermind! Just trust me, okay! It won't be fun, but we have to go get those remaining stones now, or else we won't make it."

"Suddenly, you know a bit too much about this world. It's fishy."

"I'm sorry... We will talk about it later. Let's hurry now before it's too late!"

What was that about? How did she know that storms had levels and that this one was unsurvivable without a proper shelter? I didn't know any of this because I was ignorant about the gaming world, but her... She dropped her questionable assistant act to give me life-saving information. And then she was sorry about it? Yes, that was fishy.

It wasn't the right time to press her with questions, though, as I felt that my only chance to survive Valhalla was to do as she said without doubting her.

Our skin was now all red due to the relentless sandblasting-like punishment we took from the tiny snow crystals. We lowered our headbands to protect our eyes as much as we could, and we were holding hands tightly so we wouldn't lose sight of each other in this insane blizzard.

Step after step, sinking in the deep snow and grabbing on trees and branches, we made our way back to the mining site. Good thing we had a nap just before the storm hit, or else we would have already been dead; our health bar was going down at an alarming rate.

"We are here! Quick, let's grab the stones and go back."

"Nam! It really hurts. Can we take a break and hide somewhere? Maybe there is a cave around here?"

"No. There's no time. Hang in there, Evelyn! You'll be okay."

Every time I thought this storm couldn't get worse, it was. I didn't know what time it was anymore because it was like nighttime outside; the sun just couldn't pierce that thick cloud layer anymore. In front of me, Nam struggled more than I did because she had no tracks to walk in; being the one who followed her, I only had to step in her footprints, which made my life much easier.

Her long blue hair flapped and wagged in every direction as proof that the storm had a mind of its own. Even though she kept falling to her knees repeatedly, she made sure not to drop her stones, or else they would have respawned at the mining site. I could tell it was very taxing on her now critically flashing health bar. I had no idea how much longer she could last.

As we were about to arrive at the cabin site, she turned around and looked at me as much as she could...

"E... Evelyn... I'm... I'm sorry."

"..."

Nam fell face first in the snow.

"NAAAM!"

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I stretched my fingers and toes in front of the small crackling wood stove. When I removed my metal boots, I expected my feet to be all frozen and damaged, but no, they were just fine. It was easy to forget that my current body wasn't real and that I was just part of a video game. Nothing here behaved the same way as in real life. All pain was already gone, I wasn't cold anymore, and I felt great. It was as if nothing had happened.

"Aaaah!"

"Don't move, Nam. You are safe."

"Where... Where are we?"

"Home!"

"Home?"

"Yes... This is our new cabin. You scared me so much."

"How... How did you do that?"

"Hehe. I built it!"

"But... I dropped my stones... There is no way you had enough energy to go back to the mining site."

"I didn't. When you collapsed, your body stayed in contact with your rocks, so they didn't respawn. I had to leave you behind to bring mine to the cabin, but then I returned to get yours. Sorry I had to leave you behind for a moment."

"... You... You saved me?"

"Bah... Don't mention it. You would have done the same for me. You are my friend, after all!"

"... Friend? Evelyn..."

"As soon as I placed the two last stones in the building area, it started auto-building the cabin. So, while it was doing its thing, I went back to pick you up. Good thing you are not very heavy. Oh, and that wood stove in the cabin is a marvel. It came with firewood in it already, so I didn't even have to go get more planks for it. I'm not sure I would have made it."

What I didn't tell her was that I cheated the game. Right after she face-planted in the icy snow, I double-tapped on her to open her menu, which placed her character on pause; it was an effect I had discovered last time I checked her status. I didn't think it was meant to be exploited this way, so I preferred to keep it this little secret to myself just in case my assistant was programmed to report it.

I was sitting on the floor next to Nam, who was cocooned in a warm blanket I had spawned to warm her up. Since the cabin was empty, we would spend the night this way, on the floor.

The violent ice storm was still raging, but our new cabin didn't show any sign of weakness. Even the small window didn't seem to rattle. So all there was for us to do was to wait for the bad weather to pass.

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"Wooah... It's so nice outside now."

"It is much better, yes."

In the morning, when we stepped out of our new cabin, we had a perfect view of the frozen lake and mountains; I was pretty proud of my choice of location. The rising sun faced us, and it was the warmest day we had so far, which was clashing drastically with last night's apocalyptic storm. Valhalla was so inconsistent, but it was also full of beautiful surprises like this amazing landscape.

It was time to take a good look at my new creation. The interior of the cabin was unimpressive at best. It was pretty small, I would say about ten feet by twenty feet, unfurnished, with only one window facing the lake. That little wood stove in the corner was my favorite item of the game so far. Amusingly enough, it maintained a perfect temperature all around the cabin without me having to refill it or use a poker to move the logs around. I wish it were this easy in real life.

Outside, this cabin had more in common with a shoebox than a proper house, but it was an invaluable structure in this crazy world. It would protect us much better against bad weather and would allow me to focus on something else than survival for once.

"So, what do you want to do now, Evelyn?"

"Well, I'm not too sure. I know I can unlock two more buildings, but I really don't have enough points for that. They cost 500 each. Let's see if we can improve this new house first. It probably has a status menu like all the other objects."

"I suppose it does."

I went to the front door and double-tapped it with my finger, and as expected, a small screen opened. Oddly enough, the cabin had a health bar, but the storm didn't seem to have damaged it. It also had some tabs which seemed specific to that object. One was a storage tab, which could come in handy for potential extra equipment, and another was an upgrade tab.

"Haaa! Look, Nam. I can buy some furniture. A bed would be nice. It costs 200 points."

"Are you going to buy it?"

"I think so. A bit of comfort wouldn't hurt while I'm trying to figure out this world. There! Unlocked!"

A small cube spawned in front of me and fell in my hands.

"Haha! Look! Let's go inside to install it."

"Okay."

Asking Nam to be excited about things was probably too much to ask, but I was getting used to her lack of interest in new things.

There was just one logical place where I could spawn the bed, the opposite corner of the room, away from the woodstove. The warmth was nice, but sleeping next to it wouldn't be a good idea since my mind was used to real life; it would just make me nervous for no reason.

Additionally, installing the bed that way would allow me to maybe add more objects around the house in the near future.

I placed the tiny cube on the floor, making sure the perimeter green lines were inside the cabin, and I double-tapped on it.

"We need two blankets and two wood planks to build it. We have the blankets already."

"Yes, here."

"Perfect. We just need some wood then."

It was time for a little excursion. Nam and I headed toward what was left of my woodpile in the forest. Amusingly enough, despite the snowstorm that had raged all night, the snow thickness seemed to have defaulted to its original level; it was good to know that I wouldn't have to shovel every time it snowed.

My sexy assistant was leading the way again; I trusted her sense of direction better than mine. But looking at her from behind reminded me of something, something that made me very intrigued yesterday.

"Hey, Nam. I wanted to ask you something. How did you know the storm was a deadly level 5?"

She paused for a second, then resumed walking.

"I'm not sure I understand your question."

"Yesterday, when the storm began, you said I was not equipped to survive a storm level 5. That's why we needed to build the cabin in a hurry instead of just wrapping ourselves in a blanket."

"I don't remember saying this. You must have heard wrong."

"I don't think I did. How did you know storms had levels anyway? Usually, you know nothing."

"Really, Evelyn, I didn't say such things. I'm just an assistant."

She said it; there was no doubt about it, and now she denied everything. I didn't know if she was lying to me or genuinely didn't remember. There were so many possibilities because this world was a game. Who knew if she were programmed to save me in case of extreme danger or the system had wiped her memory somehow. My feeling was that I wouldn't be able to get a clear answer from her at the moment. Anyway, I had bigger fish to fry. I needed to learn more about this world and find a way to exit it.

A few minutes later, we reached the woodpile and collected two units each before returning to the cabin; two for the bed and two to replenish the woodstove.

It was pretty funny when Nam dropped her wood next to the cabin, and the planks automatically turned into a neatly stacked firewood cord. Visually, we would be able to tell when our firewood reserve would be getting low. It was mostly cosmetic, but it gave our home this little welcoming cottage look.

As for our new bed, when I dropped my planks in the bed area, the cube automatically converted it along with the two blankets into a nice comfy nest.

While I was clapping my hands like an idiot in front of this mesmerizing entertainment, Nam called me over. She had opened the house menu to see how much firewood was in storage. But she also wanted to inform me about something else she had found.

"Look, Evelyn. This may be what you were looking for."

"What I was looking for?"

"Yes... Right here. Look."

"THE LOG OUT BUTTON! Oh my God, Nam! I can go home!"

"..."

It all made sense now. This cabin was a resting place for when players wanted to leave the game, a sleep zone for my character while I was away.

I've been stuck in this game for three days already, and I didn't think I had worried about that enough. I could only imagine what state I would be in once I returned to the real world. Was my real body starving to death? Did I pee myself, or maybe worse? Whatever it would be, a change of clothes, a long shower, and a few kilos of food would be critically required.

"Nam, if I leave, what will happen to you?"

"I will stay here."

"Hehe. To you, it is your only world, but it is not mine. Can you deactivate yourself the same way you did on the first day we met?"

"Yes. If you don't need me anymore, I will vanish."

"How will I call you back then when I want you to come back?"

"I do not have that information. You are the one who called me back last time, and I wasn't here when you did."

"Smartass! Well, I think I just said your name, and you appeared out of thin air. I guess that's how it works.

"Okay."

"So, can you vanish right now? I want to log out. I would hate for you to be alone."

"Yes, but... Can... Can you kiss me before I leave?"

"What? Why?"

"I don't know if I will ever see you again. It felt good when you kissed me, so if you are never coming back, I would never get to experience it again."

"Nam... seriously!? How could you be so emotional? You are an AI?"

"I'm your assistant... and I liked it a lot when you kissed me."

What was this all about? This game kept throwing curveballs at me. Was it trying to pull me on a guilt trip? Why would I feel this way about leaving a robot behind? I liked Nam a lot, and we had a good time together along with some intimate interactions, but she wasn't my girlfriend.

Still, it worked. Nam seemed very genuine in her desire to kiss me and her fear not to see me ever again. Anyway, what would it cost me to do it before leaving? It was not like anybody would know.

I grabbed her by the waist and pressed my naked belly on hers. Her nose was an inch away from mine. She was definitely pretty when she closed her eyes. It made me feel warm down there. When would I get to experiment kissing such a cute girl again in a non-consequential environment? Yes, Nam wasn't wrong to have requested this last kiss. Her warm breath caressing my cheeks reminded me that her presence wasn't so unpleasant after all.

I pressed my lips on hers and closed my eyes too. Slowly, we let our tongues touch and slide on each other. Nam squirmed in my arms as if she got turned on by this. Unfortunately, I had no other choice but to do the same. For a long moment, we just let it happen. Her hands reached my almost exposed butt cheeks, and her little nails dug into them. No matter what people could say, no man had ever touched me this way. The feminine touch definitely had something special in it that I didn't dislike at all.

Could I admit this to her, though? She would probably get the wrong idea.

"Alright, stop playing with my mind, Nam. Just go away now, and I'll call you back later. I really need to return to my world."

"Aww... okay. But... thank you, Evelyn... for the kiss."

Without another word, she jumped in the air while doing a front flip, and turned into a small vanishing cube, and disappeared.

Now that I was alone, I placed a hand against the wall and reached my throbbing crotch with the other. The molded metal covering it was undoubtedly the only thing that prevented me from furiously rubbing my clit.

"... Stupid AI... Turning me on like this just before I leave..."

Frustrated at my own behavior, I opened the house menu and pressed the log-out button.

Everything became blurry, then dark.

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"Oy!"

My real body awoke, and I felt the sensations returning to my limbs. It was exactly like waking up from an intense dream. I reached my virtual reality helmet and carefully took it off my head. My blinking eyes confirmed that I was back in my real house.

I scanned my entire self to confirm that I could still wiggle my toes and fingers, and, of course, my kissing session with Nam left me with the same pussy-throbbing sensation, so I had to resist the urge to slide my hands inside my panties.

Outside that, I felt great. I was rested, energetic, and awake, and there wasn't any bad smell floating around, so I had not started to rot.

"Urrgh! What time is it?"

I extended my arm to grab my smartphone from the nightstand and unlocked it. There was no text message or voicemail, which was a bit surprising. I would have thought that after three days in-game, some people would have tried to reach me. But I quickly understood why when I saw the date and time.

"WHAT? No way! I was only in the game for... THIRTY MINUTES! How is that even possible!?"

After sitting up, I inspected my body to make sure I hadn't peed my pants or anything like that. Nope. I was all dry and still smelling fresh like roses, and I didn't feel hungry at all. My only symptom was to be a little confused about this whole adventure that had seemingly left no impact.

There was another clock in the living room that confirmed that my phone was right; those three days that I spent in Valhalla were barely the equivalent of thirty minutes of my real life, which meant that a whole week inside the game would be roughly the equivalent of an hour. Four hours would be a month.

"Wow! That is sick... I could easily spend weeks or months in this game before having to worry. And it's only Saturday, I still have plenty of time to... Wait... Do I really want to return there?"

That was an excellent question; Dive was not really what I had expected. Originally, I only wanted to express my artistic side and create some random things like the ones on the cover of the game package, but now that I knew how immersive and demanding this game was, my intentions may have changed a little.

Despite my lack of decent progress, I still had moved a bit forward in Valhalla. I went from stupidly smoking myself out of a cave to building a neat little log cabin with a comfy bed that I had yet to use. Obviously, I had only scratched the surface that this game had to offer.

And there was Nam.

I remembered everything. Did I really kiss a girl in-game and even played with her chest a little? More than a little? It seemed like a bad dream. Why did I think it was a good idea? I did it for points, sure, but then perhaps I did it for other reasons too. Now I was just confused about what I had done. At least I was playing solo, so what happened between my assistant and me would stay private. But still, it felt like I had made a friend... or something. When she almost died in the blizzard, I did feel super bad for real, and I was so glad I had managed to save her. And I didn't do it only because she was the one guiding me through Valhalla; I didn't want to lose her.

"If gaming for thirty minutes did this to my brain, I wonder what a few hours could do."

It was still early in the morning, and it was a rainy day. I had nothing to do until Monday, so the probability of staying away from Dive was pretty slim, and I knew it. If I had to describe my emotions, they were stuck between excitement and confusion; I wanted to play more, but I was

just uncertain about the long-term effect it would have on me. Physically, I didn't worry too too much, but mentally, all those new experiences, surviving in a harsh environment and working on a new relationship with an AI, I didn't know where it would lead me.

After a quick trip to the washroom and a glass of water, I returned to my room and lay back down on my bed. My best shot at getting some answers to my questions would be a certain girl wearing blue bikini armor. I would probably not get any direct answers, but at least I knew Nam could provide some guidance in her own special way.

I placed the helmet back on my head... Maybe I could do this for just another hour. Or a full week in-game... Just to see...

"DIVE!"

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And I was back in my small cabin, wearing my sexy warrior bikini. Running my hands on my naked belly still felt funny as my extra pounds were not there anymore. They certainly didn't have fast food in Valhalla.

"Nam?"

"Hello!"

"AAAAH! NAM! Why do you have to appear so suddenly? Can't you just fade in slowly or something? You scared me."

"I don't know. You called me. I'm here now."

"Hey! What are you doing!?"

Out of nowhere, Nam wrapped her arm around me and pressed her body against mine. Was she... giving me a hug?

"N... Nam?"

"You were gone for days. I missed you."

"What are you talking about? I was only gone for... Ah, yes. Right."

My thirty minutes break must have felt like three days to her, but still, her behavior was a bit bold. Even if she had vanished before I had disconnected, it seemed that she was still aware of the passing time. Did she somehow remain active even when I was logged out? I knew the helmet was connected to my wifi network at home, but I wasn't too sure how the game was working. I knew nothing about technology. I played solo, but I wasn't too sure if the game was

still connected to the game company through the internet while I was away. Perhaps they needed to do that to maintain my world or something like that. What did I know?

"Nam, while I was gone, was the time still passing for you?"

"Of course, or else I would not have missed you."

"So... You were just... somewhere else?"

"I'm not sure, but it was boring. I would have preferred to stay active while you were away."

"Really?"

"Yes. I could have done things for you."

I was not gone for too long, but she made me feel guilty just now. Why didn't she tell me she wanted to stay when I had asked her to vanish? The reason why I had asked her to leave in the first place was so she wouldn't be alone, but I just made things worse for her. Another thing I just learned about the game. Not to repeat.

"I'm sorry. I'm here now. What should we do next?"

"I do not know. It is your world, Evelyn."

"Right... Well, before I spawned the cabin, I did see I could build some other buildings. Stockpile and granary, if I remember correctly. If I were to get the stockpile structure, maybe we could keep our resources near the cabin. That would be neat. But does the granary mean we will need food eventually? If yes, it would be important to build it as soon as possible so we are ready for that."

"Evelyn, you think the granary is to stock food?"

"Well, I think so... What else would a granary be used for?"

"Then yes, there might be food."

"Nam... You really are letting me do all the thinking around here, right?"

"I don't know. I'm just your assistant. I don't know those things."

No kidding.

I opened my inventory to check if the building core item was still 500 points, and unfortunately for me, it was. It didn't make much sense to me that the game only allowed me to progress if I were making out with Nam. Yes, I knew I had messed up when I set up the game, I wasn't going to blame anybody else for my mistake, but it still felt a bit too restrictive.

"Nam, is there no other way to collect points other than... you know...?"

"I like helping you get points a lot."

"Oh, I know you do! Perhaps a bit too much. But seriously, there must be another way, no?"

"I don't know. It's only the two of us here. I do not know any other way."

"Aaah, fine. That will do for now, but don't go get the wrong idea. "

"Okay."

It was as awkward as usual. Nam and I went to our new bed and lay down on it. As if to make me feel uncomfortable, her cheek turned red just to signal me that she REALLY liked this. Or perhaps it was a special technique to charm me because that made her look very cute. One way or another, she was playing with my feelings, whether she did it consciously or not.

Closing my eyes made the activity easier to initiate. I grabbed Nam's sexy waist as I usually did, pulled her body closer to mine, and then I pressed my lips on hers.

"Mmm!"

There was no room for debate; she liked kissing.

Making out indoors at room temperature was better. The comfort level was almost scary. We had no blankets covering ourselves, and it made me feel a bit more exposed and vulnerable. Learning how to play with a girl while feeling that I wasn't completely hidden from the world around me made me a bit anxious; it would take a moment to stop worrying.

Nam reached behind my neck and pressed her chest against mine; as much as I would have liked to tell her to calm down, I couldn't do anything else but to admit she was a good kisser. I reminded myself that this was a game, and there was nobody around to witness our two hot bodies rubbing against each other. I could let myself go and enjoy the moment more.

Want it or not, kissing like this for a while was relaxing. I appreciated that Nam didn't mention anything when she went to her profile to remove her top. This time, she also took off her bracers and boots, which left her practically naked outside her tiny armored panties. As curious as it was, we could take off our headbands manually, but we kind of forgot about those.

This time around, I had the decency to make it fair by stripping to the same level as she did. Not only would it make her feel at ease, but it was also much more comfortable for cuddling.

Being sensual with another woman that way still felt a bit awkward, though. Nam was all for it and enjoyed my caresses tremendously, but even if it didn't feel bad, my problem was that it caused my moral shell to crack. I knew I liked making out with this woman, but what would it mean for my real life. Men were what I had been looking for all my life, but was it just out of habit? Apparently, I could feel equally good in the arms of a girl. So was it a good thing or a bad

thing? I didn't have an answer to that just yet; I would have to keep an eye on those thoughts of mine.

"Aaaah! Nam! What... are you... doing?"

"Well, you took off your top too. Didn't you want me to play with your breast?"

"No... I... It's just that..."

"Do you want me to stop?"

"I... No... I mean... You are just... helping me to get... extra points? Right?"

"Yes. Just points... of course."

"Mmmm... O... okay then..."

Cracks in my morality. What was the point for me to think about this if Nam could effortlessly void all my thoughts with her gentle actions? The sensation of her soft hands running all over my body, including my sensitive breasts, slowly dragged me away from my baseline.

She pushed me on my back and climbed on top of me... and I allowed her to by not reacting. Was she programmed to take the lead too? Or programmed to fry my brain? Her blue hair mixed with my red hair as she lowered her head to play with my nipples using her mouth.

When her teeth gently nibbled and pulled on them playfully, I couldn't do anything else but moan. Her long wet licks dragging against my perfect and almost synthetic skin sent me to a very happy place. This was the closest we had been from making love for the first time... and I didn't want her to stop.

"Naaaam..."

It was just for points... of course.

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Enjoying the warmer weather and being in a good mood following this great cuddling session with Nam, I happily chopped the remaining of my dead tree to create some more wood. The two new building cores I spawned near my new cabin required 10 and 40 woods respectively. The stockpile didn't require any stone, but the granary was. This was why I sent Nam mining again. I instructed her not to overdo it as I didn't want her to exhaust herself. Now that I knew how slow the time was passing in real life compared to in-game, there was no rush to accomplish anything anymore. Seeing how unpredictable Valhalla was, I preferred to keep risks to a minimum.

The crazy weather we experienced yesterday had turned me into a more cautious person. We were clearly underequipped for survival, so now that we knew the weather was a real death threat, losing Nam was the last thing I wished for. Without her, I would be so screwed; she was my sole source of points so far, not that I wanted to reduce her to a mere point factory role. But still, it was an important factor to consider.

For a couple of hours and a nap in between, I piled up an impressive amount of wood planks. Even after using a good chunk of it for my new buildings, I would certainly have some leftovers. If the stockpile were what I thought it was, I would be able to keep my resources near the house. That way, if we needed wood for the stove or new items, it would only be a few steps away.

As I was coming out of the wood, carrying some more planks, I saw Nam dropping her stones in the granary building area.

"Hey Nam! Are you done mining already?"

"Yes. And I found more iron too."

"Good, I don't know why we would need iron yet, but I'm sure it will come handy."

"Probably."

I dropped my two planks in the stockpile area. I wanted to finish it first so we could begin to carry all the resources we could to the cabin before we ran out of daylight.

"Boy! I wish we didn't have to make so many round trips to get our resources. Walking in the snow is draining."

"Maybe we could find an easier way, Evelyn."

"An easier way? Like what?"

"I don't know."

"I doubt I could spawn a delivery truck in this game."

"A what?"

"Hehe. Nevermind. But your idea isn't bad, Nam. I got a bunch of new items after we spawned the cabin. I didn't check them all yet. Perhaps there is something useful in there."

Once more, I suspected that Nam's suggestion was, in fact, a pointer to some help. Sliding my fingers on my forearm opened my menu, and I began browsing my inventory. There were some random items, like a table for the house or a lantern to illuminate our path at night, but nothing that particularly caught my attention... until...

"Hey, come look at this, Nam. It's a sled."

"A sled? What is a sled."

"GAH! Your hands are so cold. Did you really have to grab my waist like that?"

"I'm sorry. I like your waist."

"Whatever. So, look at it. I bet we can use it to carry more resources per trip."

"You think so?"

"Well, it's worth a try, don't you think?"

I unlocked the sled item and spawned the small cube in front of me. Nam looked at it and said it needed 2 wood units to complete. Using two of the planks I had already brought back, I finalized the creation of our sled.

It was always amusing to see items being created out of thin air. It reminded me of those 3D printers but much faster and using red light instead of resin.

The sled was a classic; it was a simple long board with a curved front. Just by looking at it, I could tell it would be long enough for my wood planks and more than okay to carry mining products as well. But before I would do that, I had a better idea.

"Climb on it, Nam!"

"What? Why?"

"I'm going to pull you all the way to my forestry camp."

"Why?"

"Because it will be fun. Do you know what fun is? Come on, for once, we can do something other than work or kiss. Don't you want to relax a bit?"

"I'm not so sure about this. You pulling me seems a bit counterproductive."

"Are you my assistant or what? Climb on the sled."

"... Alright... if you think it's a good idea."

Reluctantly, Nam sat on the sled and grabbed the edge of the curved nose as if she was a scared child. I had not pulled someone with a sled since I was a teenager. Since Nam didn't seem to know what a sled was, it made it even more fun.

At first, her face was the pure definition of anxiety, but it quickly turned into a big smile, and then I was certain I even heard a small laugh. I encouraged her by making it look even more fun than it was and ran as fast as I could, tripping in the snow because of my useless armored boots and zigzagged between the trees. Nam even fell a couple of times but always climbed back up, which was her way to ask for more. It was the first time since I had joined the game that I took a moment to enjoy what this strange world had to offer fully. Happiness could exist even in the coldest of places.

Because of our little fun game, it took us much longer to reach my small forestry area, but it was well worth it. Spontaneousness was sometimes a perfect thing. I parked my new sled next to the woodpile and helped Nam up.

"Alright, let's stack some planks on it. I'm sure it will work."

Two things could happen. Either the game would let me use the sled to make it easier to carry resources around, or it would be a total failure. Nam grabbed a plank and placed it on the sled, and then we waited.

"It doesn't vanish."

"It doesn't appear so."

"Cool. Let's see how many we can carry at once."

One by one, we added wood planks to the sled, and it even automatically positioned them for us. To my great relief, it was totally going to work.

"How many is that?"

"This is the 13th one."

I placed that extra plank on top of the rest, and it vanished before reappearing on top of the woodpile. That was the answer to my question. We could carry a total of twelve units of wood on the sled. It was perfect; it basically turned six round trips into a single one. And even better...

"I'm spawning another sled for you for your mining site."

"Really? You are spending your point on me?"

"Nam, don't be an idiot. We are in this world together. I'm not going to make you walk back and forth all day if I can prevent it."

"Okay. Thank you, Evelyn."

After stacking more wood on her new sled, we delivered all of it to our little camp. The first thing we did was toss some planks in the stockpile area to complete it. The end result was pretty boring; it looked like a large sandbox with nothing in it. But when we dumped the remaining woods in it, it proved its purpose; the resources stacked neatly in the far corner of it. We would be able to access those wood planks whenever we had a need.

For the rest of the afternoon, Nam and I carried all the resources we had collected so far and added them to your stockpile; that storage place still looked mostly empty, making me realize

that we could store a LOT more in it. We also constructed the granary, which was unfairly bigger than my log cabin. It was just a granary, but I was still jealous.

We had no use for the granary yet, but I suspected that there was a reason for it if it was available to construct. I knew already that Dive kept unlocking things as I progressed, so it was very plausible that adding the granary could unlock something new. But how would we learn about it? That was still a mystery.

Soon enough, the night sky pushed the sun away, and the temperature dropped rapidly, once more showing that Valhalla's environment was unpredictable; after this amazingly hot day, we could die of cold if we were staying outside for too long. Nam and I returned to our log cabin to lay down on the bed and relax for a bit, feeling safe and protected by those four walls.

I rested on my back, and Nam placed an arm and a leg over me. As usual, I had to remind myself that nobody was around to judge me, which felt more and more silly. Was it just me, or was the whole society crazy and intolerant? Spending this intimate time with Nam felt good, so why would anybody try to prevent it? Why should I worry about what they think?

"Nam?"

"Yes."

"Are you tired?"

"Yes."

"You know what? You are a good friend."

"... a friend? I'm your assistant."

"I know you are, but don't you think we get along pretty well?"

"You threw snowballs at me and called me useless when you arrived in Valhalla."

"Aww. I'm sorry... I didn't mean it. I was just a bit scared."

"Are you still scared now?"

"Not really. No. Today I had a lot of fun, and now I'm cuddling with you."

"Is that what friends do?"

"Hehe, yes. I guess they do that sometimes."

She even had a cute innocent side to her. The way she pleaded ignorance all the time was annoying, but it was also adorable. In any case, her way of guiding me through the game yielded results. My knowledge of Valhalla was increasing, and my mini-camp was now pretty decent.

And this precious help deserved a little reward. I looked at Nam's beautiful azure eyes and kissed her tenderly.

"Mmm... Evelyn. Is that what friends do too?"

"Hahaha. You are funny. Yes, friends make out like this, and they also use their tongues a lot."

"Okay. I want to be your friend then."

Quickly enough, our arms and legs entwined, and we began collecting more points, comfortably cuddling on my comfy little bed. I was growing accustomed to doing kinky things with such a cute girl.

I wasn't too sure what I was doing to myself by taking this path, but I tried not to ask myself that question anymore. Today was the best day we had so far in this game. Nothing went wrong, and Valhalla behaved for once. Receiving affection from this overly warm pretty girl had to be a joyful moment. It was just the two of us, far away from everybody else.

Until...

"... Nam? Wait..."

"Mmm... You want to stop already?"

"No, listen... I think I heard something!"

"What did you hear?"

"I'm not sure... I... I think there is something outside..."

"Like what?"

"I don't know, Nam... but I'm a bit scared. Let... Let me go check the window real quick."

"Okay."

I carefully rolled off the bed. Now I was sure of it; there was some sort of noise coming from outside, something walking. Could it be an animal? After all, animals were featured on the cover of the game. Could it be that unlocking the three first buildings unlocked wildlife somehow?

I tiptoed toward the cabin's only windows, delicately placed my hands on the frame, and leaned forward to look outside.

*SLAM!*

“EEEEAAAAAHH!”

To be continued...

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