Chapter 46

Things were looking good on paper after our first day of building.  Breda was formulating the street layouts and housing projections.  The entire community was focused on creating as welcoming an environment as possible.  Not a single citizen appeared to be idle.  Kytalia was really the mastermind though.  She was essentially going to be solely responsible for balancing Malcum’s economy.

I walked to bring the wax to Kytalia who was in the general store with Elice when I checked my town map.  That was a nice feature.  If someone was employed by me then I could find that NPC or player if they were within my town limits.  I walked into the store planning on dropping off the wax.  Elice and Kytalia were in a deep conversation and paused as I entered.  Kytalia spoke, “Lord Tallis!  Great work today with the buildings.  I think even Breda was happy at the inn during dinner.”  I remember Fareth saying she would feed anyone who worked to help get the town ready.  “I was talking with Elice to figure out the pricing of goods and raw materials in the general store.  We need prices so you profit but still low enough that crafters can create things and generate a livable income.  We have identified 81 raw materials the general store will stock and their relative prices,” she said smiling.

She wanted praise so I gave it, “That is amazing.  How are we going to maintain enough space for stock in the general store?  I have a few hundred pounds of wax that you requested.”  A few NPCs had bags of holding but not many.  It was not an item that Persephone, our enchanter, was familiar with crafting.

“Breda should have found you.  She wanted to ask you to draft a warehouse to be built by the future trading dock at the river.  You should go talk with her,” Elice said entering the conversation. So before heading home to draft additional building plans I found Breda on my map. She was at Manto’s tower. I fast walked over there not sure if Breda was stirring the pot again.

I was relieved to find the pair on the roof of Manto’s tower drinking mugs of ale. A slightly inebriated Breda raised a mug to me following Manto’s example. Manto spoke, “Ah Lord Tallis, our fine dwarf city inspector here had just come by to condemn my tower.”

“Oh shush you old man,” Breda said as Manto smiled. “I was just trying to convince the old man that his tower would look so much better on the other side of this river…where all the luxury housing would be going up.” Having gotten into the conversation late I was at a loss.

“Oh you uptight maiden you just want to put one of the town’s strongest warriors on the far shore to help defend your future construction projects,” Manto said with humor in his voice. I looked back and forth between the two. Their jovial moods did not match the content of their combative statements. “Oh don’t look so anxious Lord Tallis,” Manto continued, “we sat down for a pint or two and are discussing the merits and detractions of her elaborate expansionist plans for Malcum.” I nodded slowly and thought maybe I should just leave them at it. Interjecting myself into the conversation might not be a good idea.

“Join us,” Breda belched which caused both of them to laugh. I walked and sat in the reclining chair and got a mug and filled it from the barrel on Manto’s roof. I identified the ale just in case it was the cause of this cordial but combative conversation.

*Jungle Brew ‘Leopard’ Pale Ale, -50% to constitution when calculating intoxicating effects, +10 to charisma and +10 to stamina for 30 minutes (see penalties of intoxicating effects for more details)*

It just looked like a beverage that was designed to get people drunk more easily. I sipped my beverage and it was good, better than the last sample I had tasted.

Manto smiled at my surprise, “This is our fourth attempt at brewing the perfect beverage. We are trying to reduce a person’s constitution so they can more effectively enjoy the bliss of being drunk.” Manto didn’t seem drunk at all which made me wonder about the retired war mage.

I looked at Breda. “So Breda I was asked to find you about getting some plans ready for warehouses at the future docks?” Breda’s eyes lit up.

“Yes, yes!! Lord Tallis I had reprioritized the warehouses,” she fumbled in her shirt and pulled out a sketch. I looked at it. She had four long warehouses next to the dock with a city guard shack at the end of each. “These four warehouses will house the city’s…I mean the town reserves of raw materials. The guard shacks don’t need to be built immediately but will when the city starts demonstrating crime. We have been lucky in that respect but as we grow it will be unavoidable. I need at least one of these warehouses ready before our population influx. Kytalia…brilliant woman that one…is trying to make sure all the new citizens will have the material to keep busy.” She sipped her drink and sighed contentedly. I guess all she a crotchety dwarf needed was a strong drink to mellow out… kind of cliché.

I looked at the warehouse, just the dimensions were listed. 100 yards long by 30 yards wide. Breda looked expectantly at me. “I think I can squeeze it into my drafting tonight but it looks like a simple building. We probably don’t even need plans to draft. It’s not like it is as hard to build as my epic library plans.” Her mug fell from her hand and crashed to the ground.

“Epic library plans? You have epic library plans? Where are they? I must see them.” Her excitement caused her to stand too fast and trip over herself sprawling before us which caused Manto to laugh even though he had just lost a mug.

“I don’t think we had the required skills to build it. I didn’t plan to build it for quite some time,” I pulled the plans out on my storage and handed them to Breda. She began drooling as she looked them over. It was a good ten minutes before she met my eyes.

“This changes everything! We must build this immediately! A jewel like this in our city…town…it will draw thousands to us. If you could craft plans for an epic mage academy to go with this…ah but you don’t have the enchanting, foundation ritual and runic script skills. Well, the library is…”

“Back up…Breda what skills?” My senses told me this was not a coincidence. Breda was offering this knowledge of the skills I needed to craft magical buildings. I knew this must be the AI leading me by the nose to the knowledge I had not sought out myself. I would take the bait.

“Well, foundation ritual magic and runic script are used to build buildings that utilize mana to generate their effects. Like your auction house and the guard house you built. You need the enchanting skill as it is a prerequisite for them,” she finished in a slurred speech.

Manto looked at me and stated, “Persephone has the enchanting and runic script skills. So she can teach you them if you can convince her. She is a little more uptight than my new friend here though.” Breda looked aghast at Manto’s statement.

“Friends are we? Well, friends don’t let friends drink and fly!” Breda’s indignant statement was met by a chuckle from Manto.

“Ah, but you asked what it was like to fly so I granted your request.” Breda was not angry and soon both laughed. Maybe they were now both true friends.

Breda pressed him though, “So friend Manto you would be willing to do another friend a favor and move your tower to the other side of the river?” Her lopsided grin made her look cute.

“Fine! You little witch! You can move my tower to the other side of the river. I am sure Lord Tallis will build me a nice bridge so I don’t have to waste mana flying over the river to the inn though,” he looked expectantly at me.

“I can accommodate you in that respect. It might take some time to get to the project but it will get done,” I said ready to make my retreat. It was late and I now had a few things I wanted to get done before the morning. I put down the ale not wanting to get accidentally drunk and left Manto’s tower as the two ignited into a conversation on a completely different topic.

Jaesmin had left some food out for me and I greedily filled my satiety bar. I needed to get working on drafting. I spent most of my night drafting seven more of the simple uncommon retail shop/residences. If we could keep up the same pace we would have at least 35 of these buildings ready. That would house a full quarter of the incoming migrants, about 190. Tanguin would be taking on another 142, the laborers and their families that would be outfitting and supplying our guards and military. Another 77 were the 27 guards and their families. Galana was housing them in the barely used tower by the river. After looking at the notes with the inn and townsfolk volunteering space in their homes we would be able to house 600 of the 724 when the five-day timeline was reached. I was hoping they all wouldn’t arrive at the same time. Tanguin had left this morning to meet them.

Next, I got to work on the warehouse. Inspiration struck. Instead of building the small guard house at the end of the warehouse I just added the guard housing into the ends of the warehouse. This might save time but would also give housing to six guards at each end of the warehouse. I spent a fair amount of time designing the warehouse and made it compartmentalized, with six large rooms to each side and a loft for slightly more storage. In order to meet Breda’s city aesthetic I spent time on the outside adding decorative arches and alcoves for statues. I identified the plans.

*Rare Fortified Warehouse, Health 250,000, Requires Masonry Foundations 23, Masonry Structures 43, Woodcraft: Carpentry 23 (Bonus: +50% to food preservation, +25% to attack and defense of guards, Alarm effect: stationed guards will instantly become alert to anyone not authorized to be in the building)*

That was amazing but the alarm effect seemed a bit on the magical side. I wondered what effects I might have been able to achieve if I had actually had the three enchanting skills required to draft magical buildings. I looked at the time and I had just enough time to draft an 8th copy of the multi-use shop building.

The day flew by and once again the townsfolk were making contributions to help. The furniture crafter building was cranking out an impressive amount of items. Mad Dog and company found me and asked what they could do to help the controlled mayhem. Their guild house was partially finished so I felt kind of bad.

“Mad Dog thanks for asking. Did you talk to Persephone and Kytalia?” I asked taking a break.

Mad Dog replied, “Yeah we got them their entire first month’s worth of materials and Persephone should be set for at least six months.” Black Beauty chuckled. Mad Dog pointed his thumb at the woman behind him, “Persephone ticked her off so she got her 10 times the amounts she wanted and just dropped it all on the floor of her enchanting tower.” That was good and bad. I needed a happy enchanter because I needed her to teach me some skills.

I went into my interface and checked some things. Yeah not good with funds. “I am running really low on coins. All these expenditures are draining me faster than I can afford. Plus Manto has not had time to make more copper coins for circulation in town. Can you wander around town and purchase things from the town’s residents? I don’t know if it would help much but then maybe you could use the portal stone and sell it in another city for a small profit. Don’t know if that is possible…oh!!!” I stopped in my pleading.

A huge grin was on my face, “Do you know Savannah? The young elf alchemist?”

They all returned my grin. “Who doesn’t know that girl. If you don’t know her she makes sure you do once she gets ahold of you,” Grinder said.

Black Beauty added, “If I had a daughter in the real world I could only hope she has that same curiosity and love of life that Savanah demonstrates.”

“Well good news for you all then! Her weird-ass potions are extremely profitable.” I searched for my old transactions in my interface. “Her potions were selling 40 to 60 times the amount I bought them for if you can believe it. I guess it has to do with her being so new to alchemy that she isn’t selling them at their value or maybe they are just unique potions…” I hadn’t finished before the three were already rushing off to the alchemy shop.” Maybe I should have reserved the knowledge for myself. I also felt a little guilty taking advantage of the elven girl but this was game economics, buy low and sell high.

I returned to work and the group returned about two hours later, “Tallis!” Mad Dog yelled as he approached, “You were right! The uniqueness of her concoctions is what is driving up the price. There are diminishing returns but we should be able to milk it until the game economics normal with the new brews. Black Beauty encouraged our budding alchemist to experiment to try new things…she blew up the alchemy lab and Tonna is having her clean up the mess now,” he chuckled. “We did well and will spread our newly acquired coin in town and look for other diamonds.”

“Try Manto’s new ale. He is trying to get the brewer to brew the perfect ale. Tastes great and gets you trashed with just one pint,” Grinder was the only one of the group who rushed off towards the brewery. I was surprised Mad Dog didn’t do the same.

He explained, “I have been dry on the outside for six years. Drinking in the game…I thought since I wasn’t actually drunk it would be fine. But it messed with me and my craving in the real world grew so I quit in the game a few days ago.” He sighed. “Any other leads on profitable trading?”

“No. Did you have time to explore the monolith I found? I sent you the coordinates.” I checked the town balance in my interface. Their efforts gave me about a month of operating currency. Much too small of a margin to feel comfortable. Especially with the massive influx of migrants and the garrison coming soon.

“Grinder did the research on it after we visited it. It is a marker. There should be two others in the world that make a triangle. In the exact center of that triangle, there will be a dungeon or something quest related. We haven’t been able to unlock the associated quest though. Grinder wants to head to one of the larger libraries to check to look for more clues and how to activate the monoliths. Even if we have the location all three monoliths require activation,” Mad Dog explained.

Mad Dog changed the subject, “Hell of a job you are doing Tallis. We have been selling info in the real world and your cut is almost enough for the lawyer if you want to start down that path.” He studied me. I hadn’t been following the notes he had been sending me. It had just seemed like to great a mountain to climb.

“No, not yet. Just keep holding it for me. I will know when the time is right,” I said slowly. I really didn’t want to bring the eyes or ire of the game’s creators on me. They controlled my body so I needed to be sure I could get free and support my own life functions before proceeding, “Keep reminding me though. I don’t want to be trapped in here forever.” My last words lacked conviction and I knew it.

“Your call mate. We are here for you and when the entire guild is in the game we will be fighting right beside you,” Mad Dog said as he turned to leave. He was heading back toward the alchemist shop.

For the rest of the day we finished all eight shop/apartment units. I was actually not looking forward to spending hours again this evening drafting the same thing over and over. You didn’t become an architect to do the same thing over and over again. We worked through dinner to start the warehouse. It was a large building and a little more complex than I should have made it. I called a stop when I felt we had put in enough work and sent everyone to get Fareth’s cooking, on me.

I returned home and went to my drafting table. I paged through my plans in the interface and pulled up a different one.

*Rare Apartment Building; Bonus +5% Morale if all apartments are filled, +10% stamina recovery*

I drafted two copies of this plan. Each building could hold three families so it was a good investment in my time even if it took twice as long to draft each plan. I then crafted another tannery building.

*Rare Tannery/Leatherworks, Health 50,000, Requires Masonry: Structures 43, Woodcraft Carpentry 23 (Bonus 33% chance to increase tanned hide quality, +5 defense bonus to leather crafted armor, 1% chance to increase rarity of crafted armor)*

We were not going to have time to invest in building the tannery but it helped reset my mind a little bit from the monotony of the simple tasks. Jaesmin had long ago returned to head to bed and I was feeling exhausted myself. I set my internal alarm to get up early enough to draft at least one set of plans for the simple *Retail Shop/Residence*.

As I lay next to Jaemsin I wrapped her body in a hug, my hand snaked around her belly. Then something weird happened. Her belly tapped my arm…no kicked. The baby? Her belly was flat…not showing pregnancy so I slid down and put my ear to the belly and yes! Oh my. Why didn’t she show? I spent a long few minutes listening to the artificial sounds that enthralled me. Then I reluctantly went and looked through the updates, alerts, and messages. I finally found it. In order to avoid the psychological damage of possibly killing a pregnant NPC it was decided all pregnancies would not be shown visually.

I had to agree with this. I fell asleep with my head resting on Jaemsin’s belly.