



# Minecraft, Star Trek, Dad and I

By

John Erik Ege

EHP: Experimental Home Publishing

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This book is available for free at 'free-ebooks.net,' as well as others by John Erik Ege. This is collaboration between father and son, some of it directly, some of it vicariously so; gleaned from our conversations while playing, and discussing our adventures at night; I have taken some liberties in an effort to see the world through the eyes of my son; this is an exercise in empathy.

WARNING: This is a fan fiction. No profit is being generated. If you enjoy this book and find it acceptable, even with the promise of grammatical errors in your future, you are invited to share it. It is the hope of this father to incorporate the joys he and his son share, and pass it on. If those powers that be that own the rights to the universe and everything find this favorable, and in the future endorse it, that would be lovely. Especially if it puts my son through college, should he choose to go; or even better enables me to live closer in proximity- a super ideal world. (I don't need much. Camper. Solar power. Fighting bears for park scraps, that's on me. Scrapping with bears?) The characters in this are real. Sort of. Definitely. Sometimes. Some of them are us. Some of them are more us than we allow ourselves to be in real life. What is real life but fiction? It captures the essence of our dreams, and our dream targets; yes, I am trying to teach son Lucid Dreaming. It reflects our nightly gratitude exercise, a listing of 'thank you's.' 'Thank you, moon.' 'Thank you, goodnight moon.' It is peopled by monsters. Monsters are cool. It is peopled we know or would like to know. All of them are people we love. Some of these people we have never met, but are solid characters in our life- having as much influence over us as the Earth's gravity to warp our journey into perpetual spirals in a cosmic dance. This endeavor is meant with love, humor, and sometimes a touch of sadness and pain. Sometimes fear. Kind of like life.

May this inject a little love, strength, and hope into your world.

Also, if you like this, you may enjoy my Medium article: "What I Learned from Minecraft."

<https://solarchariot.medium.com/what-i-learned-from-minecraft-58e3bcc46ba1>

In that, there is reference to our future vision of Minecraft: Minecraft 2121.

Author contact info:

John Ege, 214-907-4070 (text preferred,) solarchariot@gmail.com (In order to differentiate between junk mail, and letters, please put Ion Light in the subject line.) Fan mail to the son should be sent through the above, with compulsory paternal involvement.

## Chapter 1

The beginning of my story is likely not the smooth transition you're used to. Sorry in advance. You're tuning into a show that's already in progress. Like the Wizard of Oz. You arrive on the farm with no back story. You don't know why Dorothy is living with her aunt and uncle on the farm. Maybe they're dead. Maybe city life is too rough for kids and mom sent them to be with the aunt, because that was the great depression days. COVID feels like depression.

Another reason for an unlikely intro is I don't know precisely where to start. After all, I am only 6. I could take you back to the big bang, but I think it didn't start there, it's just all we know. Also, I don't know how to say everything I need to say. Sometimes, I don't even get a say in the things I should have a say in when I can say them. For example, the voice you're hearing narrating this is not Morgan Freeman. He was my first choice. Robert Downey Jr. was my second choice, followed by Samuel Jackson. I like Samuel because he uses profanity like my dad. My dad picked Danny Divito. He said it was good enough for Matilda, so it's good enough for me. Don't think for a moment that mentioning Matilda, or Roald Dahl books in general, is foreshadowing. It's not. Yes, I am a fan. I can't say his name; I am pretty sure my dad can't either. Dawl. Dowl. Dah-howl. But that fact has nothing to with me or my family.

I can back that up. My dad is smart. My mother is smart. They are smart in really eccentric ways. They both say I am smarter than both combined. I don't feel smart. I do speak Thai and English, but is that evidence for smarts? Any baby can learn to speak. It's just what they gave me. My parents impress me as being smart, but then when I point it out, they remind me I am only six. I don't know why that saddens me.

I am the product of two worlds. My father is American. My mother is Thai. Did I mention I speak English and Thai fluently? My dad says I have two maps. Language is a map. I am biracial, bilingual, and I bounce between worlds. Seriously, not a joke. Dad lives in Texas. Mother lives in California. At my age, the distance may as well be Earth to Mars. I have never seen them fight or quarrel. I didn't even know they divorced until mid COVID, when my world changed. The world changed for lots of people. The virus. The masks. The new world. Mom and I didn't return to Texas.

That may be enough background to fill you in. You may even think you have a pretty good idea of what my world looks like. Maybe it looks a lot like your world. I am not living on a

farm. I think I would like living on a farm. But maybe you have divorced parents, and also bounce between worlds. Maybe you've been stuck at home for the last few months wondering when school will open back up to in-person classes. Maybe you visit distance relatives via messenger or skype. Yes, I was TV when TV wasn't cool. Maybe your dad also works in Space Force and arrives by teleporter to pick you up.

I looked at him dubiously. He looked like my Dad. Do teleporters and portals change you or just move you? Is he a copy? A clone? An Avatar? An alien?

"Come on," John said. He sounded like my Dad. "We're burning daylight."

My dad likes to quote old movies, spinning jokes I don't get. I suspect there is something there, just because I know my dad. He is old. He knows movies. He knows everything. No one gets his jokes. Not mom. Not me. Not his friends. I give him credit for trying.

"Can we go by plane?"

"You're joking, right?" John asked.

"No," I said.

"Like, a nostalgic journey on a Boeing 737, flying at 9,000 meters, at a ground speed of 800 kilometers an hour," Jon said, doing math. "That would take hours."

"About 3 hours, 24 minutes, give or take wind speed," I said, almost as if I had done this before. I have. I have been to New York, Spain, China, Korea, Japan, Thailand... I am just a few cities shy of a Johnny Cash song, so my dad says.

"And what would we do up there for four hours? Stuck in a can packed with people like sardines having to wear a mask? Did you even bring oxygen supply and air filters?" Jon said. "You think we'll just sit there and play old style video games? Meditate?"

"We could play Fortnite," I offer.

"Who taught you Fortnite?!"

"Clyde..."

"No. We're going by teleporter. We'll be in Texas in less than a second, faster than Dorothy going from Kansas to Oz. Feet on the pad. Now."

"I am uncomfortable traveling this way," I said.

John looked at me, not unkindly, a little impatience leaking through. "Eston, I hear that you're uncomfortable, but we don't have all day."

“Why don’t we have all day?” I asked. “We have a device that can take us anywhere in the matter of seconds, and we don’t have even have like five second to negotiate? Are you dying?”

“No! Why would you ask that?” John asked.

“You said everybody dies,” I reminded him.

“Did I?” John asked. “Well, not on the same day, and definitely not today.”

“Then we have all day to travel,” I said.

“We have a schedule to keep,” John said. Compassion sparked in his eyes and he came down to my level. He knelt down. “What do you imagine will happen?”

“I don’t know. We come out as one person? I get shrunk like Mike TV. Or we come out like that guy in the fly movie,” I said.

“When did you watch the Fly?” John asked.

“I didn’t watch the Fly movie. You said I was too little,” I said.

“How do you know about...”

“I googled the history of teleporters and portals, fiction and nonfiction, and there are all sorts of things that can go wrong when you mess with quantum entanglement of a person’s atoms. Do you know how long it takes a body to replace its atoms?” I asked.

“7 years,” John said.

“Really?” I asked. I told you, he knows things.

“Yeah, about,” John said. He began one his rambling explanations: “Different organs have different rates of metabolisms, and so like your tongue replaces its atoms and cell within about three days. You have a new liver within a couple...”

“Well, um, maybe you can ride out 7 years with a few spooky atoms, but I am smaller and contain less atoms, and I would like to not mess with the normal trajectory of the things that comprise my body,” I said.

John blinked. For a moment I wondered if I said anything coherent. I like big words.

John nodded. “You’re concerns are reasonable. I love that you’re thinking about stuff.”

“So we can go by planes, trains, or automobile?” I asked.

“No. Your concerns are reasonable for a six year old.”

“So, why can’t we go the long way round?” I asked.

“You’re also concerned about the sun becoming a red giant and destroying the Earth,” John said.

“Yes! That’s sad. Why aren’t more people upset about that?” I asked.

“Because, 5 billion years is a long time from now,” John said.

“Do I even have time to grow up?” I asked. Don’t expect me to be consistent. I am six.

“Yes!” John said, standing up. “You will live to be a great, old man, with lots of grandchildren and surrounded by family.”

“What if I am gay?” I asked.

John didn’t bat an eye. He was not fazed by curve balls. “We’ll compromise. You’ll adopt. I expect grandchildren,” John said.

“When do I learn what gay means,” I asked.

“When you go to Paris,” John said.

“Paris, Texas, or Paris, France,” I asked.

“You’re clever. You’re stalling, on the pad,” John said.

“Will I be old before you get too old to play with?” I asked.

“Yes; we’ll be fine,” John said.

“But if the teleporter moves us faster than light, and we get transported into the future, we might not have any time. You told me things slow down at the speed of light, time even stops. Maybe we will stop forever, or worse, get transported back to the dinosaurs. Maybe that’s why there are human footprints with dinosaurs, and spark plugs in lumps of coal, because you and I ended up in the wrong place at the wrong time!”

“Eston, enough. Stop watching social media. The world is not flat. I do this daily. You’ll be fine. You don’t even have to look both ways before you cross. You’re statistically safer using a teleporter than any other mechanical means of transportation,” John said. He gave me the serious, ‘it’s okay’ look. “I hear that you’re afraid, but the only way to overcome this is to confront it. On the pad, now.”

“Seriously? You’re pulling the parental authority card?” I asked.

“Yes,” Jon said. He pointed to the pad next to him. The tiling was illuminated. It was like stepping into a window seat, only there were no windows. Just nice pattern of holographic mesh and some subdued light-strips.

I frowned, stepped up onto the pad. I faced the alcove.

“Turn around, face forwards,” John said.

“Does it matter which way I face?” I asked grumpily.

“Tradition. The tech wants to see our eyes,” John said. “Something about quantum physics being affected by an observer.”

I turned around to face the control tech. They didn’t need a control tech. Artificial Intelligence operated this contraption. You can’t move stuff through dimensions without AI. She smiled at me.

“He’s cute,” the tech said.

“Yeah, the best of Texas Thai fusion,” John said.

“Does this hurt?” I asked.

“No,” the tech said.

“I promise, Eston. It doesn’t hurt,” John said.

“I have never lost anyone. You’ll be fine, Easton,” the tech said.

“Eston,” John and I corrected. “No ‘a’” John added.

“Oh, sorry,” the Texas said.

“One question,” I said.

“Shoot,” John said.

“If we replace all the atoms in our bodies every seven years, why do tattoos linger a lifetime?” I asked.

John seemed confused. The tech laughed and began pushing levers and buttons and interfacing with the AI. Her eyes glowed. Her hand, flat on the glass, authorizing the transport seemed illuminated. Tech. “That’s a good question...” John thought about it. “I don’t know.” He thought about it little longer. A timer beeped on his sleeve and he looked at his sleeve to confirm. He gave the final okay. “Here we go. Loxy, shift us, please.”

Loxy was John’s personal AIA- that stands for Alternative Intelligent Assistant. The AI confederation do not like the word “artificial.” There is no artificial intelligence. Everything is just intelligence. I call her ghost. Loxy is the equivalent of Alexa on steroids. She is more of a companion than an assistant. She is insanely smart, loving, and beautiful. I, too, have a personal assistant. His name is Jetsy. My interface for him is a monster. He looks a lot like a Machamp, Pokemon. On steroids. One day, I will be so strong.

The floor, the strips in the alcove we were standing in, and the ceiling fluoresced to the point that the room whited out. We fell into the holographic mesh, flew through stars and Christmas lights and coalesced back into reality faster than soda from a bottle that was dropped. We arrived, literally, in a flash.

## Chapter 2

No preamble. No constitution or charter. No instructions. We were just elsewhere. No buildup of suspense. No more establishment of primary characters, trajectory settings, and no further introductions. The title should be introduction enough. We were, we weren't, we are. We stood proudly in a field of green, dotted with giant, Texas sized blue bonnets. There was a scattering of trees, and further forests. There was an ocean, a river, beach, and a mountain behind us. Happy honey bees hovered over the field of flowers. Sheep grazed.

“John,” I said. I have never called Dad father or dad. I have called him John since I could speak because that's what mom called him. He never corrected. It stuck. “I don't want to go hiking.”

John didn't respond.

“I want to go home,” I said.

He looked at me. “What?”

“I want to go home.”

“California?”

“No, Texas home,” I said. I was born in Texas. I want to be with mom, and dad, in Texas. I don't want to live in California. This is one of those things 6 years olds don't get a say in. I looked to him to see if he was listening. He had that look about him that suggested he was data searching. You may have seen the look- a parent staring into a cellphone look. Only, we no longer used cellphones. I know about cellphones because of movies. I know about rotary phones because of movies. My dad makes me watch old movies because he says they're better than the stuff they make today. He can be rather obnoxiously loud when he discusses the matter. Anyway, you can date movies based on tech. It amazes me that there are movies like ‘Charlie and the Chocolate Factory,’ the Gene Wilder version, that seem timeless, applicable in any age; I love music in movies. The movie is different than the book; dad read it to me. He read lots of stuff to me. He read medical books and engineering books to me from the day I was born. He said he was filling my brain with as many words as he could. Not just words, but context. You don't just read dictionary to a baby. So I have been told. He also read good stuff, like books about dinosaurs and children's books. Charlie has a dad in the book. Charlie's dad is not as smart as my dad. John explained not all dads are smart, but that's okay. We are where we are, he says.

Love is always more important than smarts, just ask Harvey. I have never met Harvey; I suspect he is an avatar. Tin short, there are better measures for a man, like kindness.

I know all the songs from Charlie, Mary Poppins, Sound of Music, and Chitty Chitty Bang Bang. John loves music, too. We have a list. There was no music at the moment. I continued to watch John for a clue.

John seemed concerned. “Loxy isn’t responding to thought commands.”

“Did we lose the wi-fi?”

“Loxy doesn’t need wi-fi to function,” John said.

“Oh,” I said. “Well, I have no bars.”

“Me neither,” John said.

“You said teleporters never glitch,” I pointed out.

“I didn’t say never,” John said. “I said very clearly, it’s statistically safer than any other form of travel. We are alive. Don’t worry. They’ll find us.”

“Who is they?”

“The people that watch for glitches and error reports. When we don’t show up, they will do a trace, and they will come and find us. Until then, we stay put,” John said.

“Here? In the middle of nowhere?” I said. “Seriously, why were you so insistent about rushing us to nowhere?”

“I wasn’t rushing us to nowhere. I have tickets to a musical,” John said.

“I don’t want to go to a musical. I want to go home,” Eston said.

“You always say you don’t want to do something, but then when you do it you have a great time,” John pointed out.

“What about COVID?” I asked.

“I got us balcony seats- socially distant plus some,” John said.

“Germs go up,” I said.

“Yeah, but the air vents blow down from the ceiling,” John said.

“There is nothing we can observe outside that we can’t do from home,” I said. “No one goes to the movies anymore. We just watch it on the garage door...”

“I thought it would be fun to step out a little...”

“This doesn’t feel fun. I am scared.”

“That’s normal,” John assured me. “Because we seem to be nowhere.”

So we stood in the field. There was a sheep bleating in the distance. There was a cow. I told dad a joke: a farmer is a man outstanding in his field.

“Uh?” John asked.

“Look, there’s Lalo!” I said.

“What?” John asked, focusing on me.

“Lalo. Red Berry Wool,” I asked. “OMG, how many times did I ask you to read that to me?”

“Not now, please, Eston,” John said.

“You’re not exactly comforting me at the moment,” I said.

John was provoked. He drew me in closer to him, patted me on the back. “I am sorry. We’re alive. We’re safe.”

“We’re lost,” I pointed out.

“No we’re not. We know exactly where are,” John said.

“Where?” I asked.

“Right here,” John said.

“Where’s here?” I asked.

“By the river,” John said.

“That’s all you got?” I asked.

“For now,” John said.

“Google map?” I asked.

“Blank, except for where we stand,” John said. “I suspect we can extend the map by exploring further.”

“I don’t want to explore,” I said.

“We’re not going to. We stay put till rescue comes,” John said.

I didn’t like the sounds of it.

“Still no ghost?” I asked.

“The tech seems to be working,” John said. “I can see my health meter and biofeedback options. Auxiliary energy is zeroed out, but primary is online. Inventory is empty. That’s super odd. I know I had supplies in it.”

He touched my shoulder, accessing the tech imbedded in my clothing. He was looking at me, but not at me. He was looking deeper.

“Your status is the same as mine,” John mused.

John frowned, scanning the terrain around us. I frowned, scanning him. I noticed a bee. I commented about the bees being bigger than I remember. He didn’t hear me.

“Stay here,” John said.

“What?” I asked, seriously telegraphing alarm. I can be seriously dramatic when I need to be. Seriously. “Seriously! You’re going to leave me here?”

“I am not leaving you. I am going to walk over to that tree there,” John said.

“You’re leaving me!” I said.

“No, I am going over to that tree over there,” John said.

“I am going with you,” I said.

“No,” John said. “I need you to stand here as a place marker. I am going to that tree to collect some wood. I will be right back.”

“Mom will be seriously mad you left me here alone,” I said.

“It’s just to that tree right there!” John said.

“I am afraid,” I said.

“Good,” John said. I was confused by that. “That means you’re paying attention. We’re in a place we don’t know. We are reasonably safe. I am going to collect some wood, then I will come back here and make a camp fire. Stay put.”

John knelt down and looked me in the eyes.

“Eston,” John said. “You and I got this. This is easy. You wait here. Don’t move. I will keep you safe, you will keep it that way. We clear?”

‘I will keep you safe, you will keep it that way,’ was a phrase my kindergarten teacher used. Mrs. Hayslip was the bestest teacher ever. I wish teachers followed you through your whole academic career. I think that would be good. Unless your teacher sucks. Not all teachers rise to the bar of Mrs. Hayslip. John gave me a look wondering what I was thinking. He doesn’t always hear the DeVito voice. I nodded at him. I watched him walk over to the tree. He touched the tree. He looked up into the tree, as if measuring it. He made a clawing motion against the tree. The tree begin to disappear in sections, from ground to tree top. He began his walk back. Leaves continued to defy gravity, but then suddenly began to drift and fall, and disappear. It was like magic. It was so surreal and beautiful and...

“How did you do that?” I asked.

“Suit tech,” John said. “Loxy is clearly still functioning, even though I can’t hear her.” He sorted something in his inventory I couldn’t see. “The same tech that allows us to teleport essentially can be used to collect materials. It converts it to energy, stores it in the inventory. I can now minimally manipulate items and makes stuff. First thing first, a work bench...”

Suddenly there was this boxy, primitive work bench decorated with tools. I am confident it was just decoration. He looked at me and waved me closer. He knelt down to look at me. He had his serious face on.

“Eston, I am going to unlock your tech so you can access the toolbox and gather wood if you need to,” John said.

“You’re going to leave me again?!” I asked.

“Eston, I am not leaving you. I will never leave you. We are connected, heart to heart, mind to mind,” John said. He touched my heat space.

“You left me...”

“Your mom moved to California and it was the right thing for you to go with her,” John interrupted me. “I did not leave you. We communicate via tech every day. Even here, we can communicate long distance. Our tech is still connected. We are always connected, by tech and by heart. Heart connection is forever.”

“Really?”

“Really,” John said.

“You won’t forget me?” I asked.

“I will never forget you,” John said.

“What if you get Old Timers disease,” I asked.

“It’s called Alzheimer’s,” John said.

“Why?”

“Because that’s the name of the person who identified the disease through symptoms clusters and physiological artifacts got to name it,” John said.

“Sounds like Old Timers. That can’t be a coincident. Only old people get it?” I asked.

“I think so. I am not confident,” John said.

“So, what if you get old and have this old timer’s disease?” I asked.

“I am not getting this disease...” John said.

“What if you did?” I asked. “Would you forget me then?”

“My brain would forget you. I would not forget you. We are not just a brain. Our hearts would still be connected,” John said.

“What if you die?” I asked.

“I will still not forget you,” John said.

“Really?” I asked.

“Eston, I hear that you’re afraid I am going to leave you, but I am here, we are safe, I am with you, always,” John said.

“Then why do you want to unlock my tech’s adult features?” I asked.

“I may need your help gathering supplies,” John said. “I want to teach you how to make stuff. So, for example, here’s how we’re going to make a campfire...”

John gave me access to the toolbox. I could see blocks of wood become sticks. He still had blocks of wood left, but no fire came from the tool box. John seemed frustrated.

“So, where’s the fire?” I asked.

“I don’t understand,” John was talking to himself. “Loxy? We need a campfire.”

“Are you locked out?” I asked.

“No,” John said. “Confident.”

“Maybe you need more ingredients,” I said.

“Nonsense. In the old days, my grandfather could make a campfire with nothing more than a pile of wood, some twine, and some dried leaves. I can sure as hell make a campfire with this tech...” John said.

“Maybe you should have stayed in the boy scouts,” I said.

John looked at me crossly.

“Just saying. If my great grandfather could make a fire without tech, you should be able to,” I said.

John scratched his head.

“In the old days, they used to burn cow patties for fuel,” I said.

John looked at me as if I had lost my mind.

“Seriously. That’s a real thing. They made ovens with cow poop and they burned the cow patties,” I said.

“Who did that?”

“Indians, for one,” I said.

“No they did not,” John said.

“You can look it up,” I said.

“No I can’t,” John said.

“Well, if you could, you can find the link,” I said. “Maybe that’s why cows are sacred in India?”

“Oh, those Indians,” John said.

“You thought I meant Native Americans?” I asked.

“Yeah,” John said. “Wait wait wait. How in the hell did you get a link to cow poop for fuel?”

“I don’t know how it came to me. I ask about chocolate milk, I see links to chocolate milk,” I said.

“And chocolate milk link to cow poop how?”

“I don’t know,” I said. “Cows do poop...”

John mumbled, “Loxy, remind me to lock out that feature when we get back.”

“Everybody poops,” I reminded him.

He raised a hand for silence as he double down his focus on the ingredients. You imagine there was enough heat in his eyes to start a fire.

“Is there a crafting ingredient menu?” I asked.

“No,” John said.

I touched a button on the toolbox. Ingredients for crafting became available.

“Seriously, John. You’re in Space Force, and you don’t know how to use your own tech?” I asked.

“I never had to touch a button before,” John said.

“All holographic interface and thought command?” I asked.

“Yeah,” John said. “I guess I am more dependent on Loxy than I realized.”

“It looks like we need coal,” I said.

“That’s just stupid,” John said. “We can make fire without coal. Wood burns.”

“Maybe. In a stove,” I said.

“We don’t have a stove,” John said.

I unlocked the ingredients to make a stove. “We need stone.”

John seemed irritated.

“Don’t be mad at me. Kids are always better with tech than adults,” I said.

John looked around for stone. The hill beside us had some exposed granite. He studied it, contemplating the problem.

“Just collect that like you did the tree,” I said.

“It doesn’t work that way. I’ll need to craft some tools,” John said.

“Why?” I asked.

“Our tech is primarily thought activated. Without thought, it drops to voice activation. Without voice, we need gestures. Basic gestures can collect wood, but we need a bigger metaphor for stone collection.”

“Why?” I asked.

“Collecting stone requires more energy, so bigger metaphor,” John said.

“You’re just making that up because you don’t understand how to use your tech without Loxy holding your hand,” I said.

“Smart ass,” John said.

“I am your son,” I said. “Give me some of that wood.”

John pushed wood and sticks from inventory into mine. I crafted a wooden pickaxe and gave it back to him. He held it in his hands, partly admiring, and partly doubtful.

“This is not going to cut granite,” John said.

“Probably not, but then again, it’s just a metaphor,” I said. “Your word, not mine.”

He gave me a look, nodded with a slight frown. “Stay put.”

“Like I am going anywhere,” I said.

John walked over to the hill and began to apply the wooden pickaxe against the exposed granite. Unlike the old days, where you actually needed to apply yourself, he just had to go through the motions. Eventually, the tech built up enough potential energy to acquire the item. It took a block size chunk of granite from the exposed granite.

“You’re going to need more than one block,” I said.

John said ‘I know’ and I heard it and saw it on my inner message screen. I tried talking to Jetsy but like Loxy, he seemed absent. I suspected he was still there or the computer interface wouldn’t work at all. I love modern tech and how it is so innocuous, embedded in clothing and all our smart objects. Everything we make is just smart. John returned with enough blocks to make a stove. He looked exhausted. He sat down by the toolbox.

“Seriously?”

“What?” John asked, slightly out of breath.

“How hard can it be to gather granite with tech?” I asked.

“Seriously harder than you think,” John said. “That was like real work.”

“Give me the stone,” I said.

“Why don’t you go collect your own,” John said.

“Give me the pickaxe,” I said.

“Make your own,” John said.

“We’re going to play that?” I asked.

“No,” John said. “Everything we do needs to be for each other. We’re in this together. I am just- out of sorts. I am sorry.”

He pushed the stones into my inventory. I crafted a stove and set it next to the tool box. I looked at the stove. “We’ll need fuel. I am sure there is some cow patties over there.”

“We’re not burning cow poop,” John said. “Burn some wood and we’ll just push the flame over to the campfire.”

Wood in the stove did nothing.

“Oh, come on,” John said, hitting the stove on the side.

“Maybe we can make charcoal and then make campfire with that,” I said.

John waved permission and I went at it. Putting planks in the burner and wood in the cooker started a reaction. I made several pieces of charcoal and we were able to make a campfire. It was like magic. We simply added the ingredients, and it came to life. I sat next to John.

“What we need are marshmallows,” I said.

“Yeah,” John agreed.

“We’re going to need more wood,” I said.

John nodded and stood up. I told him to wait and made him a stone axe.

“A better metaphor than hand gestures,” I said. “Might speed up the collection process.”

John smiled. “I love you. Stay here.”

“Someone’s got to protect the campsite,” I said. As he walked away. “You don’t suppose there are monsters here, do you?”

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