

I wake up, a non-zero amount confused.

Wake up is probably the wrong term, too. I become conscious? I dunno. I have memories of waking up, but I have a *lot* of them. Sometimes it's a hazy thing where reality fades in and dream escapes away. Sometimes it's the snap of eyes opening and bolting upright. Sometimes it's being dragged out of oblivion by hunger or pain.

In every one, I'm different. For one thing, in most of them, I have hands. So that's weird.

I do not have hands right now. I checked.

I'm only barely aware of having a body at all. Though I *do* have a body. I just seem to lack the level of proprioception all my memories have.

Wakefulness comes on stronger. With it comes more memories. I remember my time as a human boy, growing up on the farm, weeding small gardens with my mother and milking the oboks. I remember my marriage day as a scion of a powerful house, my husband and I securing an alliance for a generation. I remember a span of military service, routine blending days together as I kept my pistol oiled and chainmail intact.

I am in a lot less distress than my memories seem to expect from a situation like this.

Shouldn't I be afraid? Or angry? I don't know. Maybe it's because I'm just remembering, and not actually being. Because I don't think I'm anyone that I am in my memories. Or maybe I'm all of them. All of me. If I focus, I can see more, and more, details and moments frozen in time. I *feel* them, too. I know what it is to be angry or happy, in love or loathing. All of my memories, though, push me toward one unified thought.

If I was all these people, if we aren't "all these people" anymore, but instead just "me", then... that's fine, right? We're all still here. That farmboy and that soldier and that merchant's wife, our legacy lives on in me.

Okay. Existential dread temporarily avoided. Now. For my next trick, I will figure out where I am.

Ooh, I can still be sarcastic! That's good to know. I will be doing that a lot. Especially as I work to figure out, again, where I am. Or what I am. Or *why* I am. Though that one can maybe wait for a while until after the other two.

I focus, and get more of a specific sense as to my body. Okay, I can feel. Yes. I am feeling now. But... this is obviously not feeling with skin, or scales, like I'm used to. Wait, hold up.

I check a memory. Yeah, okay, at least one of who I was had scales. And teeth! Wait, we all had teeth. She just had a lot better teeth. I think the soldier memory would have been jealous of those teeth, with how easy they could have gone through trail rations.

This is not helping. Back to focusing. I have a body, it's a six pointed polyhedron, slowly rotating with one point each oriented straight up and down. This is, I understand from my collective self knowledge, *probably not normal*. But I've got no real choice but to roll with it.

It would help if I could see myself, as opposed to just vaguely feeling. I can even tell that I'm thinking strangely; there's a weird mechanism inside my thoughts that I'm starting to get a picture of. And, since I have nothing else to do, I suppose tapping at it is basically the last thing I can try, and hope it doesn't kill me all again.

Unnamed - Apparatus Of Change

Available Power : 2

Authority : 1

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Nobility : 1

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Empathy : 1

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Spirituality : 1

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Ingenuity : 1

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Tenacity : 1

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I see.

I mean, literally, I see. Or something like seeing. Which is nice. A good reminder of what it was like when my memory selves were still walking around in our original bodies. It's not exactly sight, since I seem to lack eyes, but it's close.

Also my confusion intensifies. I should make it clear that this thing I am seeing does **not** make anything clear. Sort of the opposite, really. Though it's nice that I'm not feeling that familiar gut churning emotion of being faced with something I can't understand and the prospect of being punished for failure. So far, nothing has interrupted me at all, and I don't actually have a gut. So I have as much time as I need to understand this.

And weirdly, I am starting to understand it. Just looking at it filters small bits of alien information into my thoughts. This is *me*. Or, a representation of me, anyway. But not just a mirror; it's

something deeper. It's a tether to the structure of my soul, and knowing *that* piece of information is *mildly* concerning.

Souls are real, I suppose. That's nice! And I have one. In fact, I have *six*. Each one of them a base fortification of one of my aspects, woven together to form a whole self, reinfused with memories of lives lived, implanted into this shell, and then cut loose.

I have memories of three more lives, I suppose then. Somewhere buried in me. Unlike these three of me, they aren't 'awake' yet, or maybe haven't been woken. I don't know how to explain it. I could force them up if I wanted to, but the farmer in me equates it to the feeling of puking his guts out after the time he stole a bottle of apple brandy out of his uncle's general store. So *maybe we don't do that*.

All I really know, apart from the whole 'souls are real' thing, is that these aspects are the paths of my power. And those spots between them are not pauses, but empty spaces, waiting to be filled.

With no reason not to start somewhere, I focus on the mental mechanism of **Authority**.

Wait I even think it that way? That's going to take some getting used to.

Authority : 1

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Available :

See Rank (1, Perceive)

Shift Dirt (1, Shape)

Bind Insect (1, Command)

Drop Trigger (1, War)

I see. Magic. Power! The stuff of legends! The makings of a sorcerer queen, or a wandering oakstaff! And for me, now, options. Options and an empty space. Options, and empty space, and a *cost*. A cost I can only pay twice.

My memories may be of different people, but I'm one singular being now. Even so, every part of me that's awake would have agreed to not make a hasty choice here.

I get to work.

Nobility : 1

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Available :

See Domain (1, Perceive)

Shift Stone (1, Shape)
Congeval Glimmer (1, Command)
Lock Portal (1, War)

Empathy : 1

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Available :
Feel Fear (1, Perceive)
Shift Water (1, Shape)
Bind Willing Avian (1, Command)
Alarm Trigger (1, War)

Spirituality : 1

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Available :
See Worship (1, Perceive)
Shift Wood (1, Shape)
Congeval Mantra (1, Command)
Confusion Trap (1, War)

Ingenuity : 1

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Available :
Know Material (1, Perceive)
Collect Material (1, Shape)
Invite Low Mammal (1, Command)
Make Spike (1, War)

Tenacity : 1

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Available :
Domain Map (1, Perceive)
Nudge Material (1, Shape)
Subvert Low Summon (1, Command)
Drain Endurance (1, War)

Six souls, six foundations. Four options each. And no information on any of them, aside from the context that I'm bringing in from lives I must have lived.

Honestly, I know that part of me should be afraid, or panicked even. But I don't have the body to experience the mental fatigue of anxiety, or the draining exhaustion of failure. All I have is my thoughts, and my impressions of what different me's would have wanted.

And looking at all of this, laid out in front of me?

I'm *excited*.

Control of the material plane? Senses beyond this spinning lattice shell? The ability to make my own glimmer? I don't even know what a glimmer is, but I'm eager to learn!

And yet. Twenty four options, and two selections to make. That's just kind of mean, really. It reminds me of a long ago banquet where you could only visit one of the three buffet table for etiquette reasons. Now, only two of these are on the table.

On the... I don't have a table. I don't have any kind of table analogue. I still don't even know where I am. Actually, maybe I am on a table? I wouldn't be able to tell.

Okay, that makes one thing clear. Perception something first. And the choice doesn't even seem close; I have no rank, domain, or worship. And... no particular desire to feel fear? I'm not even sure what that means. Is it asking if I want to personally experience more fear myself? I have a lot of memories of fear, everything from gnawing dread that the imperial tax collector has found a mistake in my ledgers to the exhilarating worry that I am about to be shot. I don't particularly want more of that, being honest.

Tenacity : 1
Know Materials(1, Perceive)

And just like that, I can see.

Sort of.

I can... perceive, at any rate.

My memories have not prepared me for this. This is nothing like the information input from eyes, or anything else really. This is a living mass of conceptual expressions and carefully formatted lists, writing and twisting as slight motions rearrange the things around me, and I *cannot stop focusing on it*. Which would be a problem if I were any of the people I was, but I'm not right now, and apparently whatever this power was came with the implicit - and strangely correct - expectation that I would also be completely fine with having a completely new facet of experiencing reality grafted onto my collective soul.

I can sense everything out to ten lengths away from me. What is a length? I don't know. It's not a span, or a bar. It appears to be a distance slightly longer than the length of at least one of my old arms. That is unhelpful. But I can reach ten of them. And what surrounds me is interesting. Also interesting is the fact that 'air' clearly doesn't count as a material. Or there is no air anymore. Which might explain how my old memories died, but I mark that idea as unlikely.

Without the ability to focus on anything in particular, I just get what amounts to a list. Twenty units of soil, sixty of dirt. Ten units of stone, one of metal. Four units of wood, and a very diffused single unit of plant. Trace amounts of fur.

Well, this doesn't rule out me sitting on a table. It also sort of indicates that I might be outside, too. And not one of my memories indicates that this is a desirable situation to be in, which means it's a situation that needs to be fixed. Rapidly, if possible.

I consider options. I do not have a lot of options.

My biggest option amounts to taking **Shift Dirt** and... okay, that's going to be distracting. Taking **Shift Dirt** and hoping that I can dig a nice hole right underneath myself. Maybe get a slope going, and tumble a bit, for good measure. The bad part of this plan is everything about this plan. I, again, can't even tell if I'm on a table or not. The dirt might not be *under me* so much as just generally around.

I take **Nudge Material** instead. I can feel that it's less powerful, but I don't care. It'll let me move anything. Well, anything material, I suppose. Now that I think about it, there could be a bunch of bugs all over the place and I wouldn't know, since **Know Materials** clearly doesn't hit living things that aren't plants.

Now there is some fear. Now I'm starting to worry. What if this is it? What if all I get, from now until forever, is the ability to move around a little dirt, and see a list of what's nearby?

That would be... the opposite of fun. Unfun. And maybe a kind of mentally screaming torture as well, on top of not being very fun. So I put my faith in the idea that the existence of knowledge of my available power means I can eventually add to that number. And I start nudging.

Oh boy, this is a lot harder than I expected. It turns out, when you can't actually see what you're nudging, it's a challenge. And this power comes with no visibility, only the mental lever to operate it at peak efficiency.

So I do what I assume will work, and attempt to aim 'down'. I'm vaguely aware that things still fall, even if I don't seem to be doing that at the moment. Or at least, I'm still spinning gently, balanced on a point that should not support me.

And I don't even wobble in the spin as I nudge materials out of the way below me. I think. I assume? I trust. Yes, I trust that I am nudging things away from underneath me. And then, I suddenly don't have to trust quite as much, as **Know Materials** updates me through its soul-grafted knowledge to tell me that I am now within range of more soil and *far* more dirt. Also a small amount of bone. Yay! Bone!

I mean, it's a shame about whomsoever is missing a skeleton, but it does let me know something. I am moving. Or the entire world is moving, and I am stationary. But a slowly waking memory tells me that the firmament of reality probably doesn't work that way. And as I come to understand my old life as a scholar and leader, I start to accept that maybe I'm just falling and my plan might be working.

And then, abruptly, **Nudge Material** runs out. The magic that has been flowing through me... stops. Ends. Breaks off. I can feel the empty reservoir of that particular shape of power, the mechanism firing but the effect having no fuel. It's not lost to me. But I have no way to stoke the fire again. Is this, now, it? Am I going to be a strange crystal with too many lived lives, sitting in the dirt, still spinning, forever?

That sounds insufferable. And yet, I am calm. I turn my attention to **Know Materials**, and do what I can to distract myself by focusing on it. The wood count dips up and down in small ways, and I realize that I am probably seeing a branch swaying in the wind. Or someone swinging a hanging bench over my line. Maybe it's summer, and the peach blossoms are filling the air with a sweet scent. Maybe it's winter, and the storm season is coming in.

I hope I can know again, some day.

Know Materials cuts out, emptied to nothing. And I am left again in the dark. But this time, I feel quite tired. Exhausted like I'm worn down to my bones, like I've just put in a day's labor in an hour, or finished a forced march.

But also, like I'm pulling something back into myself. It comes in tiny flakes from the material I've nudged, and even smaller motes from what I've cataloged. But it is not enough to stave off my exhaustion. And so, again, I sleep.

Goodnight world. I hope I wake up again. All of me is glad to be back.