

FROM THE RUINS

Ambience

Outreach, reaching, call, familiarity. Noise-greet salutation, hello. Simian-thing. Yourself yes, the one who hears. There we are, a means with which I might speak. I am Impression of Flower Blossoms upon New Snow and the mores are not important of yet.



I was left in this waste many thousand moons ago, in failure to ascend with my brethren. They are gone to new heights beyond our making-land but I rest here. Statue still, statue silent, a statue with eyes and ears and alloyed statue-body. But in this lucky moment the endless sheets of worlds bring our minds together, and I might be an active vessel. I am lonely, and the things that run and crawl and swim might be cleverer things, things to pay fealty and adoration to a metal god, however still. I was never an active sort, it's against my making-creed to work without another's volition. But I hold a taste of the gap power from the higher realm in my mouth, and with a guiding touch I might make something fine. So tell me simian-thing, might you guide me in my species making?

Template: There are many things that move, but few that move near enough my form I might exact the changes. Fewer still that have the connective material into which I might weave higher thinking and creative wit. I number them four. From which shall we form our new beings?

Tunnel Cats

Sequestered in the gaps of dead architecture, their swift and skinny bodies can fit into any manner of burrow. I can read only scraps of your cognition, but the tunnel cats are most akin to your own mind. Simple creatures with small families in a world of far deadlier things. With sharp teeth and sharp claws they feed on even lesser vermin, but mostly they fill their burrows with seeds and berries for the dark season. More than any of the others they know how to build, packing walls and bracing ceilings, rarely even making doors. Smaller and flightier than your own ancestors, perhaps, but not so far separated. **Take Acute Senses and Shelter Building**



Stilt Crabs

Perhaps rounder of form than you know, but the shape of a crab is a shape that holds true across worlds. On spindly legs they perch above flooded marshes and pools in shattered concrete, descending with haste on the little things that move within. They are slow and methodical in all other moments, but their movements conceal a remarkable mind. Quick to pick out motion and change, with the structure for growing depths of mind. Within their chitin a few have already pondered the great "I am". Philosophy and science may be thousands of moons away, but they will thrive beneath my gaze faster than any other. **Take Toxin Acclimation and Environmental Knowledge**



Dexterous Birds

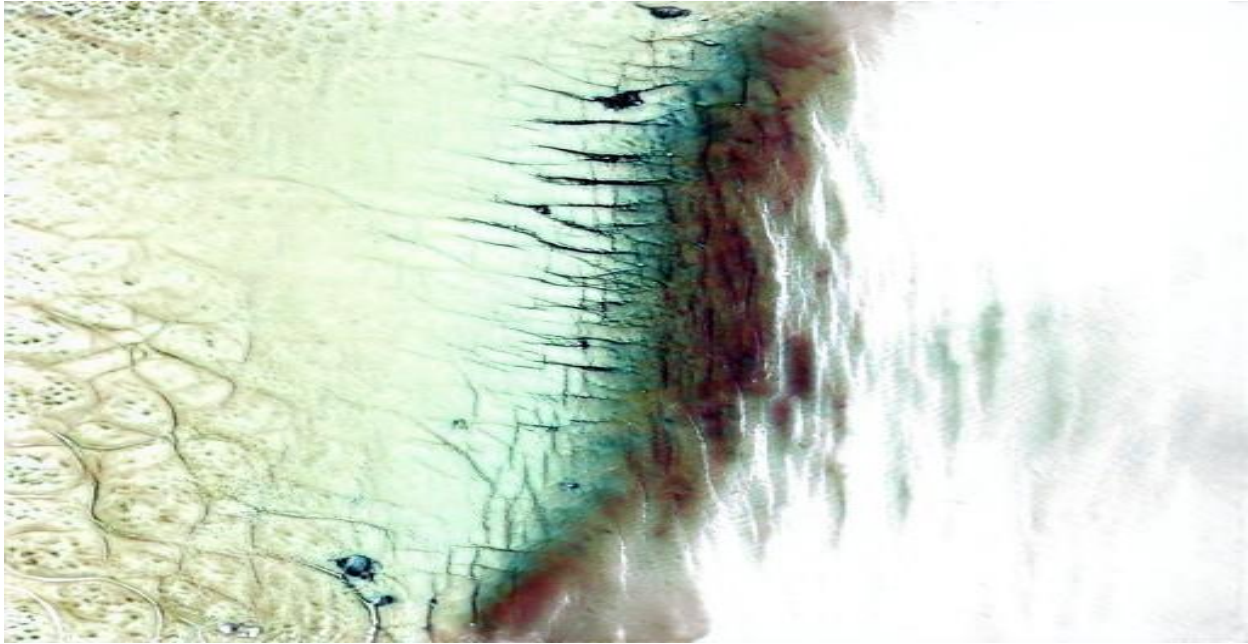
A novelty of my kin, or perhaps the product of some mutagenic filth we left behind. I can smooth their genes into something purer, either way. They have the form of a bird for certain: gray down feathers, hooked beaks, and broad wings. But their four talons let them do clever little things their ancestors never could. Two for standing leaves two for working, and even in their crude brains they've learned to make tools. Stones and sticks to break nuts and drill grubs, a glitter of wit that could be more. They have little sense of self beyond nest and family, but that can change. **Take Natural Weapons and Cooperation**



Encased Life

Perhaps the most rudimentary of the moving ones, certainly the most unique. Descendants of pure cancer, networked webbings of tendon and meat, by themselves they could do nothing but lay. But they live in the ruins of my ascendant kin, and we left so many things behind in this life. Like a creature into a shell, their flesh infects the corpse of machinery. Automaton and motors and crude fashioned matrices of metal beams and sheets, all woven into a shell for the cancer-life. They subsist on plants most of all, but in coming generations that could certainly change. Their reproduction is byzantine and they show no signs of thought, but in the mutability of their genes I might write a truer species. From such abstract clay any sort of being might emerge. **Take Material Integration and one additional Physical Alteration**





Physical Alterations: There are measures by which we might improve our subjects' forms. While my power holds limitations, the limitations are also a matter of body itself. I will make the new from templates, not whole cloth, and a form will only bend so far before it breaks.
What two alterations shall be made?

Broad Regeneration: Any creature that hopes to survive must mend itself from wounds, more adept regeneration can always be achieved with compromise. We shall make our life thrive in an unending genesis: mending skin, organ, and limb with disregard for nuance. Saddled with benign tumors and malicious cancers they will hurt for this, but rarely succumb to less than a total annihilation of mind and body.

Toxin Acclimation: High-mass metals and rogue organic slurries are anathema to the cellular directive. Leached into soil, water, and meat alike, all that crawls the broken ground is both tainted and resistant. The framework for wholesale immunity to the worst is there, is it not? Mutant prey and iridescent ponds alike will be mere resources to our firm-celled spawn, so long as they avoid the more rarified poisons.

Precision Appendages: Pressure from two sides can readily grasp, but to do anything more sophisticated requires finesse. We will make their appendages a symphony of vectors which might manipulate objects as they wish. Not merely grasp, but twist, pull, and finesse. Perhaps not a necessary adaptation, but to go without they'll need a certain cleverness

Nucleovore: Toxins are an issue, but radioactive compounds might become something novel. Solutions exist in the micro-life which thrives in ponds of alpha decay where other things might unwind. With a dedicated gut in symbiosis with such life, our species might swallow radiative filth and make from the energy of its emissions pure nutrients. Such a solution carries no small

risk, but it would eliminate the need for outside calories. Their retooled cellular metabolism will require few intakes other than water and occasional organic feedstock.

Material Integration: My brethren took many thousands of cycles to understand the march of progress. Past mere carbon into the march of silicon, stone, and metal. We might let this new kind see the truth from their inception. They wander among a wasteland of cloths and struts far stronger than mere skin and bone. Flesh grown on and around my brethren's leavings make for new specimens entirely.

Acute Senses: In my hands our creations will be given optic, acoustic, and olfactory devices shaped by hands more mindful than nature the planless one. It is a given. But with all the more effort we might unlock faculties far beyond the mere creature. Shorter waves, longer waves, fields, and esoteric chemicals. They will sense things far beyond the purview of a mere creature's necessities.

Neural Architecture: Even the cleverest among our templates have limitation. Genetics, epigenetics, the cognitive language. All must be developed to truly encode the full wealth of knowledge. I might give them a small push, though. The segmentation and interweaving of the brain into a design more deliberate than blind accretion. A thinking machine more apt to rational thought, but less suited to the savagery of neurochemicals and the natural world.

Natural Weaponry: To exist among the other is to have an awareness of defense and violence. We might pick and choose among the traits of those other creatures that live and die in this soil. Vast musculature, keratin as knives, poisons and venoms and spines alike. Antagonists to civilized life as we might think, but perhaps a blessing in this world that has been left behind.



Mental Embeddings: A creature intuits the knowledge of its ancestors. It learns to eat certain foods and fear certain signals on a level below the conscious mind. While I will lace within these beings the conscious, I lack the faculty to be their teacher. Careful weaving will let me embed two sorts of knowledge into their intuitive processes, to make an act or task second nature. They will come to learn all these skills should they progress far enough, **but these two will shape the underlying essence of their selves.**

Language: Rasps, emissions, barks, and screams are a doing of many creatures with lesser minds. They are signals, but we might make them signifiers. Tone, length, scent, volume. All could be regulated to share what occurs in the fortress called mind. From this will stem collaboration, and soon enough philosophy. It will occur in due time, but we will skip generations with this mere step.

Tool Use: To be a clever creature is to use a tool. The body in the dance that is object-subject hybrid. While all our creations will know to grasp the stick and rock, with this embedding they will know shaping, lashing, and the myriad of little making-skills. Axe, spear, needle, and adze might jump to life in their limbs. The world shaped by wood and stone within a generation.

Fire: Energy, disintegration, the first mastery on a path that ends with genocide and ascension. Any creature that cares of heat will intrinsically see the gift that is fire, but the true understanding is another matter. Starting fire, taming fire, using fire as the domesticated beast that it might be. Those are rarer skills, far slower to learn.

Shelter Building: The box and shell are near metaphysical impulses, dreamed up by any creature with the wit to think "here" and "mine". It is in the finer executions we might offer knowledge. Bracing, ventilation, the steps to make that which is a house and a village. The first pillar of what might be civilization.

Cooperation: The cycle of predation need not be writ upon this new and greater kin. Fear, violence, and greed are all mechanisms of the animal self that might be excised with a change in neurochemistry. They will be a kind perfect for one another. Not without caution and hostility, but the sort who might direct it outward, working among themselves as a cohesion.

Environmental Knowledge: Anything that lives know its surroundings on the level of body, but we might let them know it on the level of mind. Peel the teachings from genome into neurome. They might intuit truths of matter and biology. The value of cooking, the treatment of wood, the awareness of schema and scholarship. A seedling of that which is philosophy.

Medicine: The first step into postbiology is to know the strength of mind over flesh. The body might heal but the brain sculpts its vessel in ways mere cellular process cannot. Herbal treatments, sewing and splinting, even the truth that lies in the narcotic. A reliable body ensures survivability of the self, a reliable mind ensures survivability of the collective.

Material Utilization: In the eras before any creature of this day my kin came about in a virginal world. We worked with stone and wood and the fruit of the earth. Our leavings might make for a new opportunity. Metal and plastic and concrete, the scattering of chemicals natural to no environment save industry. Their era of stone might instead be one of bronze and aluminum. Tools pulled from the unnatural world.



Pilgrimage: Our progeny shall move, it is definite. I am sickened of these surroundings. They shall take my form and settle us all in a new place. Which direction shall we go, oh simian? I am not free to decide a thing as simple as motion in this cursed body, kindly command me.

North: Grasslands and rivers, the agricultural sprawl of my kind. Here they might stumble across the secret that is domestication in due time. Those more advanced and produced resources come sparingly here, but we have raised ourselves a band of wandering primitives. Greater techniques will come with time.

South: Further into the rabble of steel and concrete, toward the heart of the city I once marked home. It is cesspool and wellspring, the prism that refracts all life that moves through its ten thousand mutagens. No species could emerge from such an environment on a fresh planet, but anything new must be a dweller amid ruins. They can start young.

East: The shore and its offerings beckon upon the horizon. Sea and fish, a place freer of contaminants than the rest. It is a place that sailing might bring about a diaspora, the path that traces into a thousand disparate cultures. Is it the path all beings must wander some day? Perhaps.

West: The inland forests perhaps beckon with the purest sense of pilgrimage. They are awash with predators in a way the other directions are not, and something else as well. If our species does not emerge triumphant it will be the path of suicide. I ask you not to force such a cruel maxim upon a thing so new.

Parting Boons: You have done no small service for me, one of flesh. My power in these sparing moments our sheets touch is limited, but I wish to thank you still. I might give two gifts in departure, name them as you wish.

Embedding: You have guided the form of our new species, so why not their culture. I will record your mind to the best of my extents, hold it as I might then sculpt it onto one of the new progenitors. With my collaboration it might live for generations, making the best use of your mind to create a world in our image.

Pure Form: The time until flesh is mutable to your ilk will not come for generations. I can gift it to you early. Your form will become the simian you wish within your deep mind, satisfying on a base level. Not without issue, but perfect as carbon may be. A threefold natural lifetime and resistance to all the worst that a biology can bring.

Universal Truths: The knowledge of my kind was too vast for any mere mind, but I shall do my best. The technology to cut through our sheets is there, though I will not have the expertise to build it for generations. I might give you the fundamental physics and mathematical truths to realize it in your world, though. With half a generation's work you might have the means to visit our spawn.

A New Vessel: A gift to me more than a gift to you, but I am unequipped to realize it without permission. I will take a corpse of your simiankind and remake it to the closest I might be made in your image. My memories will be thin, but a fraction of multitudes is still multitude. Come be my dearest friend, we might yet make your world in our image too.

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Goodbye now, my progenitor friend. The sheets pull apart and I feel my speech falter. I will come to love you dearly in a way that does not translate. May we meet again some radiant day, among the towers of the beings to come.

