

09 - Musing on the Night



NOTE: This card requires a mid-quest text and a phone prompt. If a player draws it and does not return shortly thereafter, write their name, card number, and phone number on a sticky note and place it on the wall near the ACTIVE binders.

WEB PORTAL TEXT:

In his short story [*The Last Question*](#), science fiction writer Isaac Asimov touchingly illustrates human consciousness wrestling with the death of the universe. Flashing through time ever farther into the future, the reader confronts a series of inquirers staring out at the infinite, always asking a fundamentally identical question. In the first scene, two scientists sit together at night celebrating their latest discovery – harnessing the sun for boundless human usage. One remarks that it’s enough energy to last “forever.” The other turns to his friend:

"Not forever," he said.

"Oh, hell, just about forever. Till the sun runs down, Bert."

"That's not forever."

They decide to ask a computer how man might solve such an existential quandary. The answer the “Multivac” spits out? *INSUFFICIENT DATA FOR MEANINGFUL ANSWER.*

Thousands, millions, and trillions of years later the descendants of this first generation have exhausted every bit of energy found in every galaxy, all the way up to the edge of the universe, always asking the same question at ever greater levels of scale. In a final passage “Man” – now evolved to a single consciousness – looks out at the dimming galaxies in despair. He asks the all-knowing technology that is called “AC” what can be done:

Man said, "AC, is this the end? Can this chaos not be reversed into the Universe once more? Can that not be done?"

AC said, "THERE IS AS YET INSUFFICIENT DATA FOR A MEANINGFUL ANSWER."

Today your quest is to stare into the night in search of a meaningful answer.

To carry out this quest you’ll need a place of undisturbed darkness, ideally outside. That might mean taking a short stroll to a nearby park. It could mean walking into your backyard or sitting out on your front stoop. It could mean turning out the lights in a room of your house, opening a window, and leaning out to see the moon. It can even be staying an extra moment in the car after a long day of work and rolling the windows down an inch. All you need is a view of the sky, a sense of the dark, and the warm feeling of air moving around you. If you have them, a pair of headphones might also come in handy.

Set aside roughly 10 minutes this evening to go to this place and look up at the heavens undisturbed. When you’re there and ready, text the word “here” to complete this card.

Once they realized that they could walk down [...] they had this sort of forehead slapping moment where they were like, “Oh, my gosh...” And then they say, like, “That’s the same way I’m going through life. I never tried pressing the down arrow.”

- Jason Rohrer, creator of the game [*Passage*](#)

Card 9 Phone Script

[Journeyer texts HERE, Guide answers]

Via TEXT:

Excellent.

Your phone is about to ring; answer it to continue your quest.

If you brought headphones you can put those in now. Alternately, if you don't have any, when you answer put your phone on speaker. Either way you'll want to face the screen down so the light is hidden.

[Next part happens by PHONE CALL]

[Use your phone and dial their number with *67 in front (to hide your identity)]

[With this prompt the key is not to rush. Keep the voice a little soft and a little fun. Sort of like: "haha... This is a little silly, a little weird, but also genuine and I really hope you like it."]

Your voice should communicate calm, a reassuring sense that you've been through this and can hold them in their journey through the same. It's "I'm not going to act overly dour or pompous and without a sense of humor but I will do this 'for real' and if it's scary or weird, we'll figure that out together."

Breath is important. Feel free to guide their breath with your own in more places than just what's indicated if it makes sense.]

Evening, [Name].

My name is [Initial of your first name]. Can you hear me alright?

[Laugh a little bit here, if you can... Lighten the mood and break the tension. As in, "I know this is a little out of the ordinary, but go with me here."]

In case you were wondering, *I'm* not The End. But I have played the game and I've been through this specific card.

In fact, that's why I'm calling now. Someone shared this card with me and I'm here to share Card 9 with *you*. When you look up what do you see?

[They answer. If they say stars use "CLEAR" answer below. If clouds use "CLOUDY" answer below]

Here's what's going to happen: In a moment I'll say a few things and ask a few questions. The questions are mostly rhetorical, but if you want, you can say your answers out loud. Or you can decide to just listen.

[They answer, or not.]

Go ahead and start by taking three deep breaths at whatever pace you like.

[REALLY slow down here. Put the journeyer at ease. Change their rhythm.]

Now look around you. At the dark space that expands in all directions.

To your left.

To your right.

In front.

Behind.

Below

And above.

[A few moments of quiet. Perhaps just a touch of breath. This sounds a little awe struck.]

It is an impossible chain of events... Millions of tiny moments, multitudes of decisions, a procession of coincidences.

All stacked up, sequentially, timed just right to bring you to this particular moment on this particular evening. Perceiving... Alive... And aware...

A consciousness noticing itself looking up at the night and ruminating on the night inanimately reflecting back to it.

[A few beats of silence. A little laugh, maybe.]

[Next a sense of "Funny how we let the little things get in the way of what matters."]

It's easy, sometimes, to wander too much into thoughts of changing the past. Equally so, to think about what lays ahead. Our minds are such powerful instruments...

[Next section soft and SUPER luxurious.]

So tonight, is it possible to just notice yourself being, alive and living in *this* moment?
To appreciate the present tense like a flowing current all around you?
A sensation of now-ness: slippery and soon to be gone.

Tonight, your quest is to do your best to notice yourself ‘alive’ in this nighttime world

[Silence again]

[Next section a little “This is just the way it is, both beautiful and a little sad.”]

We can know that one day the lights in the heavens will burn away. Even in the dark we can appreciate the moon’s reflection of our starry sun.

[IF THEY SAID CLEAR SKY:] And for now, at least, they shine on you in the darkness.	[IF THEY SAID CLOUDY:] And even now they send their light towards you through shadows of clouds.
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And you, in this moment, shine back at them.

Take a few moments to look at the night. Listen to the sounds that filter through your ears.
Notice what images pass before your eyes. Feel the sensations on your living skin.

I’ll stay on the line with you, [Name]. We can be here together for these moments of noticing together, in silence.

[A little silence again]

Anyway, that’s it for your quest. That’s Card 9. Me describing the nighttime.

Before I go, take one more breath in and out at your own pace.

[A beat]

Unless you ask me to stay on longer you’ll hear me hang up in a moment. You should feel free to stay here as long as you like.

When you are ready, text back a word that represents your experience. Don’t forget you can always say “Leave me here.”

[Listen and respond as appropriate. When you feel satisfied you can hang up.]