

Eye Beems

Consider the species *Halictus rubicundus*, or the sweat bee. Called 'humble' by the unilluminated, *H. rubicundus* in fact has quite the arcane civilization going on. And it's a peculiarly epic civilization, too: vast lands of decadent cities that contend with virile barbarians, with offerings made to strange gods in secluded places and weird magics practiced in stygian darkness. Epic wars, too, in the air, with vast armies contesting over resources or pride or even simple glory. The sheer romance of it all! One would be utterly entranced by such things... except that they're sweat bees, so most humans can't really see **any** of this. The time scale disparity alone makes it difficult for humanity to understand what's going on; from a sweat bee's point of view, humans are more or less Ents. Sometimes extremely *cranky* Ents.

All of that needs to be understood, in order to understand [this](#). For the squeamish: 'this' is a report about how four sweat bees were found trapped underneath a Taiwanese woman's eyelids, surviving on her literal tears. The sweat bees were removed alive, the woman should recover, **everything is fine** -- but it's one heck of a diplomatic brouhaha anyway. Yes, 'diplomatic;' there are sixteen

major *H. rubicundus* empires in Taiwan, and all of them are deemed vital to the survival of Taiwan should, you know, things go pear-shaped with the PRC. Which was one reason why those bees were removed alive.

The other reason? The bees in question are now four of the most powerful mage-bees in the world. Turns out that drinking the tears of one of the Striding Song-Mountains (yeah, humanity has been called worse things by non human species) for that long gives the drinker a tremendous boost of power. So much so that one of the Four can now throw fire beams actually perceptible by human beings. Naturally, every bee-mage in the world (there are a **lot** of them) is suddenly eager to undergo the procedure themselves.

They are not, however, eager to have the Striding Song-Mountains wipe out their entire species, which might become an agenda item if suddenly humanity was faced with the specter of legions of bees swarming and *going for the eyes*. So... there are negotiations going on. Careful negotiations. Negotiations that should not be disrupted. Such as, say, by a Sphere* of rogue sweat bee mages looking for a secluded spot where they can apotheosis themselves quickly, before anybody notices. Yeah, if *that*

got out then there may be a breakdown in negotiations, and nobody wants that.

So, how to resolve this? Why, that is an *excellent* question. Got any excellent answers?

*Aerial magic users rarely organize themselves in mere Circles.

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