

Unnamed - Apparatus Of Change
Available Power : 2

Authority : 2

Bind Insect (1, Command)

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Nobility : 1

Congea! Glimmer (1, Command)

Empathy : 1

Shift Water (1, Shape)

Spirituality : 1

Shift Wood (1, Shape)

Ingenuity : 1

Know Material (1, Perceive)

Tenacity : 1

Nudge Material (1, Shape)

I continue my work, such as it is.

I have two droplets of power now, and I don't know what to do with them just yet. So instead, I try to figure out what I *want* to do.

I've been so distracted by my spells, by playing with the world around me, reaching out like a curious newborn, that I didn't really stop to consider what I actually want to do.

My world has been one enjoyable beehive and a particularly sturdy tree for days now, and I while I have yet to grow bored of it, I must admit I know next to nothing about the broader world. I don't even really know if this is still my own world at all.

Though some of my memories overlap. They've never met, but they know similar kingdom names and peoples. They, at least, were from the same plane. And I'd like to think I'm still there, but then, my circumstance is somewhat unique.

Are there people in this world? And if there are, will they ever find me? If there are people, would I recognize them? My soul's pieces were once human and viash and... was cleric a demon? Is that why those memories are filtered strangely? It is possible. It doesn't change that all those lives were equally varied and vibrant experiences, and each of those people would have been thrilled to explore here, now.

What do I want to do?

I can grow over time, as much as I want. I can pull in more drops of power, expand my magic, and delight in touching the world in a dozen different ways. But I think, before I lose myself to distraction, I should settle at least on the outline of a goal for my actions.

I think more on my bees, and what I have seen of their hive. And I think, drawing on my past lives, that perhaps I would like to try to build something like that.

Building things sounds satisfying. Building things for people, or even just for them to be filled by life, sounds like a calling that resonates with me.

An instinct tells me that I should build defenses, build weapons. Build so that I can protect myself. And I agree, in part; perhaps out of fear and perhaps out of some cold logic. I should be able to protect what I build. Especially what I build for others.

But I will not let that fear command me.

I find this thought to be a crystallization of something in me, no pun intended. I will build, and explore, and I will almost certainly be afraid quite often. But if I am driven by anything, it will be curiosity and compassion. Not fear. Not again.

Again. Yes, my memories echo within me. Louder than before. Not *again*.

Yes. I like that.

I also like one of my spells completing itself. **Congea! Glimmer** was a strange name for a strange effect, and I am still not sure exactly what it is I have created. But created something I have, regardless.

The result of two days of slow buildup sits in the thin grass on the edge of where soil turns to hard clay near the bank of the small stream that runs just outside of the sensory range of **Know Material**. It is, as far as I can see through the eyes of my bonded honey bees, nothing especially impressive.

Just a small little pebble of a gemstone. If it even is a gem at all, and not just colored glass. Bees do not see color all that well, compared to what I remember, but I can tell it is a blend of soft greens and browns. And it sits there, inert.

Well, inert in the eyes of my bees. Nor does it show up on **Know Material**, which I find interesting. Whether it's gemstone or rock or glass, it doesn't really seem to register to the spell as any of them, and I was watching the ledger carefully for any change.

But where it's not inert is in my heart.

I can feel the glimmer. With a sense that I didn't realize was natural to me, because it had nothing to sense until now. Imagine being in the dark your whole life, and then seeing light, and realizing that blindness is relative.

I feel it with the same strange impulse that I use when I feel the pull of new motes and spots of energy into my spells. When I touch the world around me, and extract something from the spots I have interacted with. But the glimmer doesn't contain anything that's being drawn to me. Instead, it lights up with a thin layer of the empty water that mixes with how I perceive my spell constructs. And toward that, from somewhere 'around' it, I can feel it sucking in those motes the same way I do.

Or perhaps it is better to say I can feel those motes moving. And I know where they are moving toward.

The small oval, barely the size of one of my bees, sits on the ground, and fills itself with power. It does this for only an hour or so, before it stops.

I continue to observe it, waiting to see if it is going to change anything further, but it does not. So, curious, I ask one of my bees to touch it. Well, I command one of my bees to touch it, but I loosen the control as soon as I do, so they can leave if they wish to. I am trying not to be some form of bee tyrant.

The bee buzzes to the spot the gem occupies, nestled between a few flowering vines, and alights on the small stone. And then, right away, I can feel something moving back out of the glimmer, and... I suppose, into the bee? But it's different. Tinted. The bee does not like this, so whatever sensation it is generating, it cannot be pleasant. It takes off immediately, returning to a nearby flower, and I let it go. She deserves a small vacation, and also I am out of charge for **Bind Insect**.

The glimmer silently reabsorbs enough something from around itself to refill what it moved to the bee.

I still do not know what this is meant to do. What this is *for*. I know why, conceivably, someone would want to reshape wood or stone, why someone would want to command a swarm of insects, and especially why you'd want to have eyes to see. But the purpose of this is unclear to me, beyond simply making something beautiful.

Maybe that's all it's for. Creating something pleasant.

But when the bee touches the flower it is on, and I feel through it's command tether the sensation of a flow of warmth and life, and the flower's petals open slightly more, colors becoming ever so more vibrant, I suspect that something more is going on. And those suspicions become confirmed when there is one of the larger trickles of those points of light that I've ever felt, coming from the bee and flower both.

It's still barely anything, really, compared to what it takes to fuel a spell. But it's there, and it's filling my core all the same.

I am going to need to congeal more glimmers, it seems. Though perhaps not too many; while I enrich myself with them, I should be mindful to not cause the hive that is fueling me any burdensome discomfort.

It will take some time, whole days, for **Congea! Glimmer** to come back to a usable state. In the meantime, I feel I can expend some of my power to experiment with something that I already feel I know to be accurate, but would like confirmation of.

I expend one of my points of power.

Spirituality : 2
Shift Wood (1, Shape)

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Available :
See Worship (1, Perceive)
Congea! Mantra (1, Command)
Confusion Trap (1, War)
Small Promise (2, Domain)
Drain Purpose (2, War)
Make Low Blade (2, War)

Now. I am not going to question, too much, why two of the three new spells available to me are classified as war. The soul segment that is my **Spirituality** is, in many ways, not a *kind* spirituality, and I can see evidence of that here now laid down before me.

But also, another spell of the new classification. Domain. Should it be strange to me that the things that are labeled as such are showing up only now, after I've already had access to things that could sense my domain? I do not know my own species, anymore, but I feel as though this is either abnormal, or that I am myself aberrant in some way.

Does it make domain? Claim it? Or is it simply echoing with that word because I somehow know it is tethered to the idea? Questions abound, and answers are in short supply.

But what is not in short supply is my capacity to **Shape Wood**. And here, my experiment pays off in truth.

The increase in **Spirituality** has done exactly what increasing **Authority** did to my capacity to **Bind Insect**. I have not gained any new finesse, made obvious by the way my clumsy loops of wood are still exactly that. But what I have gained is, firstly, a deeper reservoir for the spell to draw from, and secondly, more strength. I can move slightly more, do so slightly farther from my body. The spell may be the hidden knowledge of how to make the world dance, but the facet of the soul is the muscle that lets me move the lever.

It will take me some time before I feel another surge of connected glory that represents a point of power generating in my core. And this time, I do plan to explore another new spell; one of the second ranks. It doesn't seem to matter what the rank of a spell is, the power cost to be bestowed with it two regardless now, for both **Authority** and **Spirituality**. Perhaps it will go up every time I find myself with a new slot to fill.

Part of me considers improving **Empathy**, so that my **Shape Water** can actually reach the nearby water to shape, and open up another possible flow of new motes into myself. But **Distant Vision** calls to me. I wish to see where I am more purely than through filtered insect eyes.

And so, I wait. I do not even observe my bees, letting the spots of weight from them filter into me to slowly refill **Bind Insect**, while the rest of my spells do similar work.

I can almost feel it now that I know what to search for. The tilting vertigo of being right on the edge of something enormous. The point of power preparing to fully come together like a tiny sun in my body, before dying down to an ember that I can manipulate.

Which is, I suppose, why the universe finds fit to interrupt me now.

I notice it first through **Know Material**. Amounts of leather and hide. Some wood, some metal. And then things that are new to me this time around. Cloth, meat and grain, some water, and a miniscule amount of wax.

That last part is interesting, because that means that the beehive, which is in some way wax, does not count as a 'material'. I had already known this in some way, but here is more confirmation.

But why is a smattering of hide, wax, metal, and foodstuffs, walking into my range of sensing?

I don't want to care. I want to sit back and experience the universal connectedness that is the rush of new power. But even as I feel my soul tilt over the edge and the process start, I painstakingly drag my attention away from it. I need to know what is changing around me.

So I focus through my bees. There will be time to know the greatest sensation I have ever felt later.

Honey bees are, really, very small. It's not their fault. But when they're trying to give me a vision of full sized people - humans, I suppose - the difference in scale starts to threaten to disorient me. But I can still more or less make out what's walking into the clearing.

Two people, at first. But as I swing my bees around in a high loop above where their nest sits among the green of the tree, I catch sight of more distant shapes approaching as well. The distance and short range of the bee's sight makes getting a full count a challenge.

One of the lead pair says something, pointing to the nearby stream, while the other slings their pack off. They are dressed in what look like dark leather armor, scuffed and scarred, well worn and well used too. But as the bee catches a warble of incomprehensible sound from one of them, the other humans catch up, and they're dressed in simple, heavily damaged cloth clothing.

More confirmation, **Know Material** is showing me the unworked substances only. I do believe I could **Shift Wood** on the longbow one of them is carrying unstrung over their shoulder, but it's not going to show up as the *material* of wood. Not as I see it through this spell, anyway.

The rest of the humans have made their way to the clearing. They stay somewhat clear from my beehive, but I *think* that at least one of them has walked over where I buried myself. I can't really say for sure, without any frame of reference. But that's less important than what they bring with them.

Nine people, counting the two that are their forward scouts. Four of them children.

Either that or some humans got smaller since my last lives ended. But I suspect that is not the case, and I am looking at families. Or, more concerningly, they might simply be survivors. I see injuries on some of them, under the damaged clothing. And it doesn't look like they've brought a lot with them. I've started to get a handle on what, exactly, a unit of a material means, and I can tell already they don't have enough food for more than a day or two.

Unless this is a camping trip from a nearby village, they're in at least a little trouble.

I conserve my resources, watching through a single bee as they set up a camp. They have no tent or other shelter, only bedrolls, and fewer bedrolls than people. They make use of the water from the nearby stream, while some of them try to gather wood to start a fire. The children just... stop. They sit down, one small girl curling up to sleep on the dirt among the flowers.

Every one of my old memories is acutely aware that this is wrong. I am also aware that the humans gathering wood are collecting wet wood that will not make for a good fire. And while it would be the easiest thing ever to stay hidden and do nothing, I... can't. I cannot, and I will not, be idle when I could take action.

Shift Wood weakens the connection of one of the higher branches of my nearby tree. I target a limb that has no new growths, that I suspect is already dead and is certainly dryer than anything they're going to pull out from the muddy bank of the stream.

It drops to the ground, causing jolts of surprise, which I cannot hear through my bee's lack of ears. But all the same, the sudden motion attracts attention, and soon enough the dry branch has been hacked into firewood.

I help a little when I think no one is looking, using **Shift Wood** further to peel thin scraps apart into strong kindling, shifting the sticks slightly to catch the wind better. At least one of my old lives knew quite a lot about living in the wilderness, and these old tricks come easy to my arcane hand.

And then I just... settle in to wait, and watch. I don't know what I could possibly do with what's available to me right now. My selfish desire for **Distant Vision** can wait until after I can figure out something to give these people a small push. I might need to grab another spell, so I keep my two points of power and leave my options open as I just watch them make camp, prepare some simple food, and cast their exhausted eyes around.

Fortunately, none of the unbound bees bother them, and they don't seem in a hurry to bother the bees. It probably helps that it's getting on toward night, the sky darkening as the blended suns dip down below the horizon.

I have nothing to do. So, I continue waiting. Watching my spells fill up, though not gaining any further power. It is amazing how the tension, what many of my old lives thought of as a physical thing, can be so powerful here. It pulls my focus toward a singular point, even as parts of my mind that have grown around spell structures keep me intellectually informed about things like the state of my bonds or the amount of rock that exists near me.

It is the same amount of rock. The rock does not change much. It does not take up much of my attention to know this.

Time wanes and ebbs. I know it is passing, but it is becoming easier to simply wait for something. Even if I can feel that I am a long way off from more of the revelation of new power.

And then, through my bound bees, a shock runs. The hive stirs around them. Something has made a sound.

Bees don't really hear, but they can feel noises, and the sharp sounds coming from outside agitate the hive, even now at night. I take direct control of my small flight, and move them to observe.

In the dying light of the small fire, two of the humans are arguing. I can tell they are yelling from the force of the sound and the angry gestures, but I know little about the topic. Bees do not have good night vision, either, it seems. But I can tell at least that it is the armored woman, still wearing her dirty leather even now, and one of the others who followed behind.

I can't know what they're fighting about. But I can tell, without really needing extra senses, guided by my memories and my own personal knowledge of the world, that they have woken the others, and that the children are shrinking back from the exchange like terrified animals.

So unlike the ordered and caring hive of bees, they are.

Intervention is required. But how am I supposed to intervene? Half my available spells are for violence. Even if I were to acquire **Drain Purpose**, what would that do to a person? I cannot risk sapping them of their will to go on.

No, what I need is a distraction. Something to pull their attention, and get them through to morning. Something that can stall until I can communicate. Or perhaps, something that can facilitate communication now, even if in a limited form. I take a gamble, the singer's memories flashing past with a thousand rolls of the dice, with only a few of them nudged into the right spot. I try to nudge.

Spirituality : 2
Shift Wood (1, Shape)
Small Promise (2, Domain)

The spell blooms in my mind with a different flavor than the others. Stronger, too. More complex. It is a good thing my magic arrives ready to be used, otherwise I would be too slow in investigating the simple *how* of the power, rather than the much more useful *what can I get away with*.

A promise is a transaction of trust. The magic makes that trust something heavier, and explicit. But to keep a promise, something of value must be offered. Even if that is simply time, or recognition, it must be real.

I have precious little to offer, and even less that would be enough to draw attention from the escalating fight that is starting to draw more concern and yells from the people in the camp. But there is one thing, perhaps, that might be enough.

The magic slips out of me, and I make an offer. A small one, but the most possible complexity I can slip out of the spell.

Stop fighting, and I will show you something useful.

The humans *freeze*. Even through the limited eyes I have on offer, I can see both of them go still, just before the fight comes to blows. The others around them are still making noise, but both of the two standing by the fire whip their heads around silently, before looking back at each other with widened eyes.

I think, then, the small shock is enough to get them to realize just how many children are crying around them. Or maybe it is simple greed at the offer of a reward. I don't care.

They step away from each other. The armored woman taking a deep breath, the other figure dropping the small knife he was gripping, before dropping to their knees. They exchange words

that I hear through my bees as distant vibrations, but they are not yells. Not shouts of anger. And around them, the camp calms slightly, though even *I* can tell it is still on edge.

The woman helps her opponent to their feet. The two fulfill their end of the promise. And in turn, I begin to hold up my end, as I am keenly aware I *must*.

Shift Water is a spell I have minimal experience with, but now it is full of energy and ready to use, and I pull upon it. Drawing what is left of the liquid in a cooking pot out and up over the fire, using my bees to guide my application of magic. I still lose some of it, drops falling off the mass. And the spell does *not* take kindly to holding things in the air.

But the empty substance that fuels it will hold long enough, and I have a promise to fulfill.

Through one bee perched on a bedroll, I can see them wordlessly staring at the moving water. And those eyes track the shape as I move it toward the edge of my range, and down toward where I activated **Congea! Glimmer** days ago. And then, I run out of effort, and let the water splash down.

One of the humans, carefully, follows into the dark, kneeling down to look at where I pointed them. And returns to the fire, a small gemstone in hand.

They hold it up to the fire, and it catches the light. The two armored humans let out noises that I believe are laughs, one of them making a symbol of faith with an open hand, the other simply staring up at the sky, lips moving silently.

My promise is fulfilled. From between those who had been fighting, a spark of that heavy something manifests in my senses, and pulls itself with a powerful gravity into the center of my core. Though my bee sees nothing, and neither do the humans, *I* know that I have just gained something ephemeral and meaningful from the encounter.

There is no more disturbance in the camp that night. Many of the humans lay down to sleep. And, my reserves of strength drained away, I follow shortly.