

Unnamed - Apparatus Of Change

Available Power : 7

Authority : 6

Bind Insect (1, Command)

Fortify Space (2, Domain)

Distant Vision (2, Perceive)

Collect Plant (3, Shape)

See Commands (5, Perceive)

Bind Crop (4, Command)

Nobility : 4

Congeal Glimmer (1, Command)

See Domain (1, Perceive)

Claim Construction (2, Domain)

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Empathy : 4

Shift Water (1, Shape)

Imbue Mending (3, Civic)

Bind Willing Avian (1, Command)

Move Water (4, Shape)

Spirituality : 5

Shift Wood (1, Shape)

Small Promise (2, Domain)

Make Low Blade (2, War)

Congeal Mantra (1, Command)

Form Party (3, Civic)

Ingenuity : 4

Know Material (1, Perceive)

Form Wall (2, Shape)

Link Spellwork (3, Arcane)

Sever Command (4, War)

Tenacity : 4

Nudge Material (1, Shape)

Bolster Nourishment (2, Civic)

Drain Endurance (2, War)

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Animosity : -

Amalgamate Human (3, Command)

I know I agreed that I would accept **Stone Pylon** into my soul, so I would have something new to experiment with. But now, two days later, I'm finding that I hardly have the time to consider it.

Time is becoming as valuable to me as magic itself. Many of my spells simply sit in the backdrop of my life, giving me small insights when I need them. Many others are situational;

Drain Endurance, for example, is not a magic that I need to apply on a daily basis unless we have fallen very deep down the well of trouble that is our collective lives. And this is good, really. Not every tool needs to be a general purpose one. Every life I've ever lived has used a shovel, and they've all used them for different things, yes. But only one life ever learned cryptographic accounting practices, and while it served her a little too well, I do not believe the soldier or the singer would have even understood that they even *could* care about that, much less why they should.

For the rest of my spells, though... they require the most valuable resource I have. Attention.

It takes time for **Form Wall** to expend itself repairing the breach in the fort, and while I am over halfway done with my task, it needs me to guide it. The materials for this project come from **Collect Plant**, a spell that requires me to take time to select what I am collecting, and while I could do it without much thought, I don't want to undo days of work by failing to check on if I am uprooting a rotting tree. **Congel Mantra** is currently being poured into **Bind Crop**, the same way I would empower a knighted honeybee or a pushy crow, but instead sent into the whole crop plot. It requires of me a level of exertion from the spell that I had not yet seen, and it is still not finished forming, but every drip of power I add to the working takes careful intent on my part. **Move Water** is useful for easing the burden on the survivors, who *are* still in the process of recover, even if they won't admit it to themselves. And **Shift Wood** draws on the artisans I have been, letting me smooth seats, remove splinters from floors, and try to put doors back together.

Even if perhaps the sight of a door is still somewhat worrying to some of us. I still do not know what fel magics the enemy apparatus that occupied this fort had at its disposal that it could simply turn any doorway into a blast like misfiring gunpowder. **Detonate Door**, perhaps. The fact that my mind shapes the words to echo like with my own spells makes me dread that I am correct. Or at least that such a spell is real, out there in the world.

My eventual, meandering point in all of this, is that experimentation is something I have fewer hours to set my new mind toward. I have not even made use of **Link Spellwork** today, and it has refilled itself suitably. I had intended to use it to see if I could make a combined glimmer and mantra object, something perhaps that would be of use to the survivors, or myself. But one of those spells is now wholly occupied, and I have not put thought toward a new experiment.

I would put thought toward it, but I have been worriedly watching Kalip through **Distant Vision**. Another thing that is consuming the finite resource of my attention.

He reached the river last night. Not the same place we made our crossing; it was easier for him to simply cut through the denser parts of the Green rather than following the rough trails and open spaces our larger group had. The bowman made the crossing with a terrifying exertion of his magetouched nature; finding a log that extended into the river and balancing on it in a crouch, shifting to steady himself a few times, Oob burrowed into his backpack securely, before he simply launched himself off and over the two lengths of flowing water.

He'd left a furrow in the mud on the other side when he landed. The honeybees just flew over, which Kalip had quirked something that was almost a smile at.

Now, it's midday. I'm still watching him, actually taking a rest for a change, as he sits in a high branch of a tree, feeding one of the honeybees a slice of a dull green fruit. I take the opportunity to check in, since **Link Spellwork** doesn't have any pressing need and it only makes sense to keep as much as possible slowly refilling in the arcane part of my souls.

Link Spellwork connects **Bind Insect** to the **Distant Vision**, and abruptly, I can feel the bees there, as well as Oob. The rest of my connection falls away as **Bind Insect** is focused into the small zone that I can see through my far sight spell, but this is alright. The rest of my bound are prepared for it, and remain calm as my tether to them is briefly out of range.

The two honeybees stop what they're doing, and move in a quick formation that makes the soldier in my reminisce about her old parade march days. The two of them quickly flank Oob, as the beetle pulls himself up to an alert position. Maybe not something a human could notice, but he makes the effort, and I appreciate that.

Kalip notices the signal, if nothing else. We've done this a few times now, and he knows what to look for. He nods once and starts talking. "All clear." He tells Oob, and through the beetle, me. "Spotted a bosu earlier. It looked different somehow. And there's tracker signs that a lot of prey animals have been fleeing the area. Everything's quiet. No combat. Crossed the river, please advise on heading to intercept second party."

I switch what spell I'm connecting to **Shift Wood**, letting the bees move out of position to signal that I can no longer hear. And then, in a trick I've rapidly been getting good at, I look through **Distant Vision** in a very odd way.

I still have one of my three active uses of the spell focused on the other camp. They've moved, recently, but I'm keeping watch on them, and they only went far enough to make it to a water source before they broke a new camp on the bank of a small lake. I have another **Distant Vision** centered on Kalip.

If I'm being honest, and I should be, I am not exceptionally skilled at aiming this spell. My newfound ability to 'sweep' it across the landscape is invaluable simply because I cannot properly point it where I need it to be. However, as with many of my magics, I can aim a spell through a spell. And at a spell.

So I point the third **Distant Vision** I can manage out of the one on Kalip, toward the one on the others. And instead of simply layering the bubbles of sight on top of each other, I use that technique to slide it through the trees. Which gives me a perfect view of which direction Kalip needs to be heading, all in only a few minutes. I use **Shift Wood** on the tree he's sitting in, pushing away a pool of its bark and revealing pale wood, which I mark with a simple compass. This way returns to us, this way to the others.

Kalip glances through the trees, in the direction I indicated, and nods. Opens his mouth. I switch away from **Shift Wood** to **Bind Insect** again as he realizes his mistake and begins to repeat himself. “Thanks. Nod one bee if you think I can make it by nightfall.”

I consider the distance. He probably could, if he pushed, but I’d rather he didn’t. Diplomacy done while you’re exhausted has, in my experience both lived and remembered, not been that fruitful. I ask both bees to move in a wobble, letting him know he can pace himself. Kalip nods once. “Understood.” He says. “Moving out.”

I pull back my magic, checking the vials of empty liquid connected to each spell. **Distant Vision** is still nearly full; my use of it stressed it enough to make it dip, but with **Authority** so strengthened, it recovers rapidly even with multiple bubbles kept active. **Bind Insect** is lower, because much of it is reserved to keep my bound nourished and developing, but it, too, is strong. **Link Spellwork** has fared the worse. I have noticed that the higher the rank of a spell is, the more it consumes to operate, and I haven’t been drawing in enough power this last tenday to reinforce all of my souls as much as I would like.

Ingenuity contains some of my more useful spells for both learning and defense. Perhaps it would be a wiser idea to raise that, than to take a new spell that may do nothing. **Link Spellwork** I could always use more, as with **Distant Vision** it gives me a range no other apparatus seems to have. **Form Wall** and **Sever Command** are also incredibly helpful tools to have, and having more of them would be welcome. Not to mention, there are still spells under the soul’s domain that I covet. **Refine Material** especially, perhaps also **Create Fire**. And that is before seeing what might be unlocked...

I remember that I made a promise to listen to the advice of my peers, though. And that **Small Promise** remains only half-fulfilled. As easy as it would be to justify this second guessing as falling under their acceptance of my own experimentation, I have a personal feeling that this is disingenuous. Perhaps the magic would accept it. I do not know, and nor does it matter. Hewing to the letter of a promise is not the same as abiding by what I *meant*.

I will seek out Seraha and Yuea later, after the evening meal, to ask. Not because I need to for some cold transactional reason, but because that is how peers and friends should act toward each other.

Many of my old lives had friends. Had companions, or allies, or some form of partners. All of them had ways they *wanted* those relationships to behave, and all of them found themselves somehow disappointed. Not always in overly painful ways, but there was always something. And often, it was their fault in some way; they knew there was a better way to behave, but couldn’t find it in them to make that final leap. To say the important things, to share the meaningful vulnerability.

I won't be mad at those old lives. They'd grown up and lived with whole *worlds* pushing down on them. Forcing them into patterns and moods they didn't ask for and couldn't easily escape. But now, all of us are *here*, reborn through me in an abstract way. And while I have a world seeming to push down on me, it is one where we are *on our own*. Under these conditions, all pretense of how I *should* behave becomes stripped away and revealed for what it is. An obstacle to real trust and true friendship.

Perhaps, through me, they can finally have the kind of relationships that they wanted to begin with.

I roll the thought over in my mind as I reinforce the garden that I am tied to with **Bind Crop**, watching through several bees who are helping as pollinators as the sprouts become stalks and leaves and buds in hours, instead of tendays. I've made the leap in trusting these people with my form, and my magic, already. And in turn, they are trusting me. I'm growing *food* for them. You don't let someone be your fielder if you don't implicitly believe in them.

And the thought strikes me. **Small Promise** gives me these little indications at outs that I could have. Technical fulfillments of the oaths I make. But I always know, in my new heart, that technicalities and half-committed attempts aren't how I want to live.

Should I always need the spell to remind me, when I veer too close to that edge of thinking I can get away with something? Or should I hold myself to the standard I claim to want?

A candle later, as the sun is beginning to set and the colors of the world around us turn tinted with orange and purple hues as the sunset I cannot see paints the sky, I find a small moment. Drawing from the well with **Move Water** so that Seraha and Dipan have a supply to cook with, I use **Shift Wood** to write a message to the elder demoness.

I would like to tell you all something, after the meal. I write to her. *Could you please tell the others?*

She looks quietly at the words, and I realize that I have not written them quite as neatly as I do when I have more focus on my work. A glance around, her faded pink fur rustling in the evening breeze, shows her that there is no beetle there to talk to, only one of my watcher bees.

Her muzzle curls into a small smile. The kind that several of my old lives remember the impression of; the elder who has seen the world their whole life and learned its lessons well cutting through to the center of the worry, seeing more than just the surface words.

Seraha touches the words with a soft hand, and nods to my bee. Then her smile fades back to the focused expression she puts on when she has work to do, and she grabs one of the buckets to carry back to the kitchens, the growing fuzzy watcher swirling through the air around her as she walks.

I have a few things to do, before the survivors gather for the night. Which is good. Because I find myself more nervous than I can remember being. And I could use the distraction of finding a good tree to add to my inner storehouse.