

**Unnamed - Apparatus Of Change**

**Available Power : 12**

**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 : 6**

***Congeal Glimmer (1, Command)***

***See Domain (1, Perceive)***

***Claim Construction (2, Domain)***

***Stone Pylon (2, Shape)***

***Drain Health (4, War)***

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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 : 5**

***Know Material (1, Perceive)***

***Form Wall (2, Shape)***

***Link Spellwork (3, Arcane)***

***Sever Command (4, War)***

***Collect Material (1, Shape)***

**Tenacity : 5**

***Nudge Material (1, Shape)***

***Bolster Nourishment (2, Civic)***

***Drain Endurance (2, War)***

***Pressure Trigger (2, War)***

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**Animosity : -**

***Amalgamate Human (3, Command)***

**Trepidation : -**

***Follow Prey (2, Perceive)***

I spend the long night practicing magic.

One of the benefits of never sleeping unless it is suitably inconvenient, dramatic, or painful, is that when I *do* have time to myself, I can make quite a lot of progress out of it. And I availed myself of that time through the night, while Kalip silently glared out at the Green and the children tossed restlessly in their beds.

Making more **Stone Pylons** to constantly cast **Congel Glimmer** was the first thing I did. I had wanted to try a handful of small experiments with **Link Spellwork**, to perhaps confirm or refute my thought that it wasn't blending magic at all, but really simply letting me cast spells through or into other spells. **Stone Pylon** and **Form Wall** was one of those ideas, as was trying the same with **Collect Material**, just to see what that would even *do*. But, again, **Link Spellwork** is the magic that gives me *reach* in this dangerous world, and I am dull on using too much of it while my friends might need me at any moment.

So instead, I spend a candle trying to convince the **Stone Pylons** to at least make a *slightly larger* glimmer. They do not listen. They are very stupid, and I am aware of it, but still searching for solutions. I think briefly that **Pressure Trigger** may allow me the option, and I use it and ask Kalip to help me test it, which he obliges, on the condition that I don't make him leave his spot on the wall.

I learn two things. One is that **Pressure Trigger** seems to only allow for me to set the target, either directional or a small area which does not need to be the trigger itself. The other is that the pylons will simply make one small glimmer then stop until the small raised plate is depressed again, even if they have built up the required reservoir to do more.

There is also something else, though. Some little instinct from the singer's old life that makes me think there's something hidden in **Pressure Trigger**.

It's only a second rank spell. My soul of **Ingenuity** is at five, and **Link Spellwork** is full. I can spare a *small* test. Just one.

I try something simple. **Link Spellwork**, using what I think it truly does, to more properly cast **Bolster Nourishment** *into* a **Pressure Trigger**. And as I do so, pathways and mechanisms in the magic unfurl and reveal themselves to me. This is partly what it is *meant* for. I could do this without **Link Spellwork** at all, though it would take me... days, perhaps. Tendays.

The finished spell makes a small raised lip on a wooden counter in the kitchen. I know, through my connection to it, that it will deploy it's stored magic when depressed. I ask Kalip to test it for me; he stares down the steps to the courtyard for a long stretch, and then pretends he cannot read.

I'm sure Seraha will notice it tomorrow morning.

The rest of the night is spent on the glimmer themselves. I have some of the newer glimmer bees, who seem to have taken well to flying at night, help me carry a supply of the stones out of the fort from where I create them in the courtyard. There's no sense waking everyone up with repeated explosive failures.

And then I resume the process I had started what feels like a short lifetime ago. Feeding the strange flowing nothingness of my magic down through the tethers to these stones that warped the world around them, trying to tease out what I know must be in there.

I've been using these magically congealed stones as bombs more than as anything else, so much so that I think I have forgotten how I made progress initially. This is a form of deflection that I use mostly on myself, pulled from the memories of the cleric. It is invaluable to protecting my ego as the first several glimmer explode.

At least the explosions are more manageable when I'm not trying to make them as large as possible to kill things. And after several tries, I am once again clumsily feeding a thread of magic down the tether.

I can't quite figure out what I am *doing* this for though. The last time I made progress, a liquid black tail started to form out of one of these tests, but I cannot seem to replicate it here. I practice pulling my magic *back* without destroying the glimmer, and after a few more tries, I can do that well enough. But I don't know what I'm trying to create.

My focus begins to narrow. Oh, I keep **Distant Vision** running, but Yuea is standing guard on the expedition, and the woman's stubborn nature and disdain for sleep has only been encouraged by her new body. But aside from that, this one task becomes the thing that I want to pry at.

Candles melt away as I try different things. Perhaps the glimmer's position matters. Perhaps the color. Perhaps the *amount* of magic I give it. Actually, color does seem to play a large role in it; none of these have the same black and silver shades that my first success did. Perhaps *that* is why I cannot replicate it exactly?

An old memory surfaces; the merchant, finding unexpected profit in enabling people to do what they want instead of pushing them into jobs they dislike. And so I stop trying to replicate my first success exactly. I feel it out. Let the magic flow, pressed forward, but going where it wants to go. I can adjust it later if I need to.

And it works. Somewhat. It is from a glimmer of brown stone flecked with gold that it begins to work, and I almost lose the progress in surprise, as a limb begins to *extend* out of the glimmer. *It is* a limb, I was right! Not a tail, though. This is more like a stage puppet's arm; rough,

unpolished wood with a grown over joint. It settles onto the loamy soil as I hold off on adding more to the glimmer. But the whole thing is... not stable. If I stop here, I know it will just fade away. It needs more.

I provide it. Carefully, gently. Now that I see the way forward with this one, it becomes so much easier. This glimmer wants to be something. It wants to be wood, and structured intent. I give it the magic to be that. Another limb folds out, then another, and finally a fourth. Legs, with thick flat platforms holding them up, forty five degree angles on the joint before they come back to where the glimmer still sits. It's missing something.

The central body forms last. The wooden light of the glimmer in progress pouring out like resin, forming a shell that splits with a line on the front that opens into a single pale gold pupil. And then, abruptly, I am *done*.

There is no more glimmer. Well, there is. I can feel the tether, it's still there. But where there was before a stone, there is now a small *creature*. It's not overly impressive; just a near featureless thing maybe a bit bigger than an adult's hand. But I know, instantly, that it is *mine*. This isn't a creature I bonded, this is a glimmer I made from part of my magic and worked into a shape myself, this is a *creation*, and it is a part of me like the limbs I once had were part of my old lives.

I open *my eye*, and I look at the world.

It doesn't look especially impressive. This small new life sees the world as sharp lines and boxy shapes. The bees see far more color, Yuea sees *everything* when she lets me borrow her eyes, and Oob has made himself into a tiny scout of worrying strength. This is almost underwhelming.

But then I realize, for all the effort it took to explore what it took to make this work, **Congea Glimmer** is still almost full. I've made one small, four legged ball of a creature. Hard shell, glimmer surrounded by I think sap insides, and an eye. But I could make so, so many more of these. I could make a hundred a day, if I devoted myself to it. Though the math may change if each different color of glimmer needs me to learn a new pattern. Or if I can make this work with *larger glimmer*. Or... or... the glimmer that is in my bees? Maybe?

No, I discard that line of thought. That is a risk I will not take. And besides, the **Small Promise** to them is still intact, both in word and in true heart's intent.

I am so caught up thinking about it, about the logistics and potential of this tool, that I do not notice my bees switching out as they get bored or tired. I make two more of the small things from similar colored glimmer. It's so much easier the second and third time, though it still takes me a candle for the pair.

It is here, lost in thought, that I am still moving with delighted purpose when the sun rises. When our little expedition begins to move after a breakfast of fried nuts and dry fruit. When they make it to the river meeting point, just in time.

Yuea calls for my attention, as do some of the bees. But I am already there, the tiny bit of my focus watching through **Distant Vision** having shown me when the casting of the spell focused on the expedition and the casting on the river spot met each other.

It's a hard spot for most of them to get to, for everyone who isn't a bee. The spot is at the start of some rocky rapids within the river itself, a mound of rock and mud that requires effort to navigate up to. Yuea pretends not to have problems, but I can see the marks through our enforced bond where she overextends the altered muscles of her legs and creates cramps or strains. Mela and Dipan don't even try to help her, and I get the impression that they might have tried at some point and been harshly rebuked. Fisher has the most trouble, but Mela gives the gob a hand up the slick slope.

"Now what?" I read the words on Dipan's lips. Yuea just shrugs and says something I can't hear. Fisher is leaning over the river, as if trying to figure out how the broken pole they came from relates to this place.

Now, I do three things. The first is to use a little of my longer range option to make contact with **Bind Insect**. The second is to **Fortify Space** the area, just in case, and because I do not want my precious bees or I suppose Yuea to be taken from me. The third, and most important, is to make a **Small Promise**.

*We are here to take you somewhere safe.*

And nothing happens.

Well, the sun continues to rise, the air warms, the soft wind goes from a chill to shake off to a needed thing to manage the heat. The group lingers, eventually sitting on the bank of the river, or stalking around in Yuea's case. Mela wonders if they scared the other apparatus off, Dipan wonders if they just didn't bring enough buckets.

I suppose I can't blame them, if they're afraid. I don't know the cost of breaking a **Small Promise**, but I suspect they might know the cost of a **Small Trade**, and it's reasonable to think that it would be "worth it" to betray another of our kind. To eat their power and scatter their souls.

I pass the time in my own way, making **Stone Pylons** on the edge of my range, in the direction the silkspinnners are coming from, and loading them with **Drain Endurance**. The others pass the time drawing in the dirt, or swearing repeatedly if they're Yuea. I consider making another promise, when Mela throws up her arms.

“This is dumb!” She announces. “It’s right there! Why are we just waiting around?!” Her arm is pointed into the river.

“...Where?” Fisher asks slowly, the gob scratching at the pebbled skin of their neck.

“If you aren’t falling stupid...” Dipan starts, and ignores Mela’s shouted retort. “Then it probably just doesn’t trust us. I know the little guy says we’re safe here, but if it actually was crazy, it’d just attack anyway. It’s probably waiting, and watching us. Or just afraid.”

Yuea snorts. “It’s an inhuman magical weapon. Why’s it afraid?”

I want to answer, very badly. Mela beats me to it. “Do you think that she wasn’t afraid of us?” She says quietly. “Of course it’s afraid. It’s a stay... state... it can’t move.” Mela’s dramatic moment is undercut slightly by forgetting the words she’s been picking up from Seraha.

She offsets that by finding a solution to the problem, which is pure madness. To the alarmed shouts of the others, Mela pushes off the bank, and slips herself into the river. She ends up knee deep standing on a rock, wavering as she balances against the current. “You fucking stupid kid! Hey! Get out of there!” Yuea barks, almost tripping as she kicks off the ground and leaves a divot in the mud launching herself toward Mela.

Mela ignores Yuea and Fisher reaching out to try to help pull her back, though. Instead, she gets her balance, and holds her hands out. And through **Distant Vision** I have an excellent view of the thick bodied fanged eels moving toward her. There’s five of them, arranged in a pattern that I can’t quite understand but the soldier’s thoughts instinctively see as tactical. And they’re arrowing right for my friend.

My bees take off, buzzing over the water and ready to try to interject if needed. To see if they can learn how to spearfish with their stingers on short notice.

Mela also sees them coming. She stays still as they start to circle her. And then, showing far more courage than I would if surrounded by that many teeth, she reaches out to one. Nervous, flinching, but still doing it.

The eel bumps its snout into her hand. And impossibly, does not bite her. Instead, it pulls back slightly, and then the rest of them start to cluster up next to it. A writing brace of eel bodies, clamoring for attention from Mela, who has an enormous smile breaking out on her face as she starts trying to run her hands across all of their smooth scaly forms.

Fisher calls out a warning as the river moves, the gob shifting clawed feet and preparing to dive for Mela if needed. Yuea has a pistol out, leveled in the direction of the center of the river’s path. But as the water suddenly splits, and lowers, she lets the weapon drop.

“Aw, fuck. Okay, you were right.” She says, as the apparatus reveals itself. “Now never do that again.”

The eel apparatus has five points to it, and is an unevenly shaped seamoss green. The water parts around it easily, and it doesn't try to stop the river at all, instead simply diverting its path and letting itself be shown, resting just above one of the algae covered rocks just at the start of the rapids.

Yuea says something, and starts to move toward it. The eels pull back suddenly, and for the first time in seven different lives, I sense trepidation from a *fish*. Dipan must feel it too, because he splashes into the water next to Mela, a pair of buckets in hand.

It has been, for all of this life, hard enough to communicate. Intent is hard to guess, hearts are hard to see. But to the other apparatus, seeing these people show up, with my magic following them, ready not only to carry it away but to bring its bound creatures with them?

I hope the intent is clear. I think I would understand, in their position.

Mela reaches the apparatus first, and gently, so gently, lifts it up and begins making her way back to shore.

And as I feel the **Small Promise** begin to dissolve into a storm of soft notes, I add one more magic to the day. It costs quite a lot of **Link Spellwork** to do it, perhaps because of the odd circumstances, but I feel it is worth it.

To reach out to my sibling, and attempt to **Form Party**.