

**Unnamed - Apparatus Of Change**  
**Available Power : 9**

**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)***

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

**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)***

That night, after my companion bees helped guide a group of paradoxically restless and tired children out of my makeshift classroom and to bed, I evaluated what I should be *doing*.

Most of my lives had never really been the kind of people to let themselves remain stationary. A soldier on the march, a singer on the road, a cleric moving from safehouse to safehouse. The merchant would have been the closest to someone stuck in one place, but even she roiled against that. I saw it to be poetic, then, that I was now incapable of moving at all without help. Perhaps it was allegorical for some lesson that the stars meant for me to learn. I wouldn't know, I still lacked the range of vision to actually look up at the stars. I should have taken advantage of my crow's eyes to peek at the night sky when I had the chance, but I was, after all, busy.

I should still be busy. I have a dozen spells, any one of which can be used for a handful of things. And I need to make use of them. I simply don't know what I should be doing.

There was a form of *purity* that came along with my sudden manifestation of life, the meeting of the refugees, and the frantic flight through the Green beset by enemies on all sides. We had direct opposition, and a clear goal. And the feeling of exercising my power to *reach* that goal was... exhilarating, in a way I don't think most of the survivors would understand, if I tried to tell them.

Now, though, I am left with no clear objectives. Nothing is trying to actively kill the people I'm protecting, we are working to build good lives for everyone here and to add more people to that list, and I am...

Floundering. Adrift in a sea of options with no clear course.

It's terrifying. Briefly, at least. Here in the dark of my thoughts, pulling myself back to simply sit and think about who I am while I let the empty liquid fuel for my magics fill to the brim, I can be honest with myself. I *don't know what I'm doing*. I don't truly think I ever will. I am the first foot - metaphorical foot, at least - out into uncharted territory. The others can advise me, but I'm still the pathfinder on this journey, and this realization of freedom is equal parts scary and exciting. Because that's all it really is; freedom. The freedom none of my collected souls ever had, here, now, manifested as long as I have the strength and cunning to keep it.

Maybe that's why the six of them became the seven of us. A shared wish, to be free.

My respite ends as my spells finish drawing in what they need from the spaces around me. I put aside my brief existential crisis, and remind myself of something important. There is one way to figure out what to do with my freedom; use it, and don't repeat the mistakes.

So, while the mortals that aren't named Kalip sleep, I get to work.

With **Bind Crop**, I have already woven a tether to the second tilled plot. It's not exactly a farm field; only two lengths to a side. But it is a crop, and now, I focus on it, and see if I can't do something interesting. They've planted even rows of summer yams, and instantly, I can feel the flow of magic move easier through the tether to it. This is a *crop*, not a garden, and the spell knows it.

I start small. Moving magic into the plants with no real direction. They absorb it greedily, and I begin to sense the impression of growth. Not magical, just accelerated; the plants aren't even as smart as bees when it comes to using what I give them, it seems.

Then an idea strikes me. They aren't like my bees; they're *yams*. I don't have to worry about hurting them, not really. So I try something that I would have found unthinkable with my other bonds, and start to pull that magic *back*. And it works. Not reluctantly or slowly; the reservoir of **Bind Crop** retakes what I spent from it just as quickly as I gave it out, safe for a few tiny drops that have already been used up.

Interesting. But also, I believe I can do more.

I pour the magic back through the tether, and I focus on what I *want* from this crop. Not just faster growth, but something more. Just a small change to what the yams are. I take the old experiences of foraged camp meals and harvest festivals, and I weave that into what I push through the tether. The idea of how the yams could be *better*. A little easier to cook, a little more filling, a little sweeter.

I'm not sure if it worked as I wanted it to, but the change takes root. I won't really know for days yet, until they're ready. But I do know that it will be *days*, not a whole season. Food, practically on demand. No one will go hungry here again.

The rest of my magical stamina flows through the tether as I pour it down after that first impulse. A steady stream of change leaving my souls and taking hold of the plot of land and the growing future meals there.

I consider adding **Congea! Glimmer** to it. But I suppress my desire to experiment, for now. There will be plenty of time once we have more farmland cleared, more people to feed. I've decided it to be a forgone conclusion that we will be finding more people. Or they will be finding us, I suppose.

It is interesting to be focusing on **Bind Crop** at this time, while I have no other perceptions active. Because it lets me spot something I do not think I would have otherwise. Something like motion, or information, from the first crop plot; the chaotic and varied garden that still grows faster than it should. Something has been removed from it.

Just a small amount, but something nonetheless. The spell doesn't make a judgment on it, but as I try to peer through the knowledge it gives me, I realize that it isn't simply someone harvesting a late night snack, but instead bits of plants being taken in uneven chunks. Bites. Some creature of the night is eating my people's food.

If we didn't have all the stored provisions of the fort underneath me, I would be angered. I might seek a solution that involved mobilizing the heavier, more dangerous bees under my auspices.

Or just asking Kalip to fire one of his particularly lucky arrows off the fort's wall where he's keeping watch.

But none of that really seems needed, when I can find a more calm answer without even really trying.

**Form Wall** is a spell that might have limits in what it can do, but it trades those limits for being able to move far more than my other spells. I could build a fence from **Shift Wood**, but it would take me ten times as long and not be quite as good.

Also, it has the unique benefit that I can pull the trees that I've taken from around the Green with **Collect Plant** out of the spell's nowhere place, and put them to work. Which is what I do, now.

The foundation of the fence I sink into the ground, using **Nudge Material** to move the soil and loose rock around and allow the passage of my larger magic. I'm trying to be forward thinking, and I know that someday soon, what I'm starting as a fence might be the next layer of a village palisade. So I do it *right*. **Form Wall** collects from the ground, as well as the logs I feed it, as it spins magic and material into existence with no fanfare. Sunken posts, a low solid wall two trees thick flush with the ground to keep out the smaller creatures, and a fence on top to deter anything larger that might jump, just in case the deer around here finally decide they aren't afraid of the fort at all.

Making doors is harder. For that, **Form Wall** simply doesn't help; it is, after all, not **Form Door**, which I assume must be a real spell somewhere. Actually, I need not assume anything, do I? I'm resting in the fort we took from an apparatus that manifested doors repeatedly as it tried to fend us off. But regardless of my assumptions, I put the refilled **Shift Wood** to use smoothing and polishing handles and hinges, using **Nudge Material** to pack down the dirt underneath to make them swing easily. It's not perfect, but it won't keep the crops in shade, and it will deter most pests.

Something keeps eating my garden, and I realize that I never actually *removed* the first pest in the long candle since I started building a durable garden fence that stretches around both plots and further still, planning for the future of a larger farm. Pulling **Bind Insect** to the fore of my mind, I wake up some of the bees that are curled up together in a nested pile on one of the walls watchtowers, and ask them for help.

I had thought to give them directions, but as they try to remove what looks like an irate raccoon without harming it, the bees become increasingly creative in their attempts, and I leave them to it without input. Though I do watch with a corner of my mind as they attempt to see if four of them can grab all of the creature's limbs at once and simply fly it away. That does not work. But not for lack of trying.

I move on.

Despite walling off a future farm plot of a hundred square lengths, I still have an abundance of wood stored in the form of captured trees. Along with the other, less usable plants, they don't seem to weigh me down at all, and there is so *much* within the Green to take that I don't think anyone will notice. So I take the time to use **Collect Plant** another three times on nearby trees, restocking my future wall material, and bringing with them a number of hanging vines and mosses.

It is as I am using **Imbue Mending** paired with **Claim Construction** to try to refit the old well in the back courtyard, our main source of water in this place, that a thought strikes me. I can, and already have, put the bricks back together and stop the fraying of the rope and splintering of the bucket that they use when I am not around to draw the water myself. But I could be doing *more* with this. And **Link Spellwork** is still holding strong, as my small usage hasn't done more than dip its reserve, and **Imbue Mending** is at least ready to test this.

So I try another idea, just to see what will happen. I call upon **Move Water**, which eats away at its own stamina rapidly, and pull up from under the earth a flowing column of life giving water. And then, once again, I use **Link Spellwork** to join to the spell I am holding in place **Imbue Mending**. Not to the water, but to the *spell itself*. This particular application of magic, this cast web of change upon the world. The deceptively simple motion of dipping the spell down within the well, and pulling a stream upward.

**Imbue Mending** drops to almost empty in the time it takes for a bee's wings to beat once. **Link Spellwork** similarly drops away from me, though not as much, and **Move Water** goes with it. There is a sensation like fumbling, something slipping away from me, and my own thoughts scrambling to hold it all together.

And then the feeling is gone, along with what the working of my magic. But, as I survey the well, I see something that fills me with excitement. The pillar of water I brought to the surface has mostly flooded back down into the well, but not *all* of it. A thin flow, perhaps the size of an arm, bubbles up in the middle of the well, looking quite small among the wide brick maw. It flows like water from a farmer's pump, in infrequent gushes, but it *is still there*.

I don't know how long it will last. But *next time*, I think, I can do this properly. And make something that might stick.

A few more things happen quickly, none of them especially exciting. I finally help my bees, using **Drain Endurance** to subdue their foe so they can carry the pest out of the garden.

**Bind Insect** along with **Congea Glimmer** and **Congea Mantra** bring more bees from the hive into my fold. The hive itself is still doing well, and the offspring of the larger and glimmer enhanced queen, seem to be more active than their smaller brethren. Soon, in a month or so, after generations of bees, there will only be the newer versions of them. I do not know how I feel about this, but the bees themselves have never faltered in their devotion to each other, and to me.

**Stone Pylon** still has not regained enough of itself for me to make a second try of it. Also, Yuea's plan to find me stone to use has been put on hold while those of us who need sleep get what of it they can. It occurs to me that if **Verdant Pylon** works in any way similar, and the name is any indication, perhaps this would be an outlet for the rest of my **Collect Plant** spoils. It will take fourteen power total to test that, which is a large investment. But **Authority** does seem to be my most valuable soul for the daily lives of my friends. So I consider it.

I had previously had a dozen small ideas with **Link Spellwork**, but foolishly threw my supply of it for the day away. Still, it recovers enough of itself for me to attempt something small. I focus on the room in which I use **Shift Wood** upon the wall with the help of some of my beetles to instruct the children every evening in the written word. Oob is still there, having decided it is as good a place as any to nap while he waits for more people to snoop on. But he is not my target this time around. Instead, I weave together **Claim Construction**, calling on the part of my domain that already includes this room, and **Link Spellwork** into it the much stranger **Congee Mantra**.

I am not sure what I was expecting. Perhaps a physical change, like the bees see. Shifting words upon the tables, or glowing runes hanging in the air. None of that occurs. Instead, through the knowledge that **Claim Construction** gives me, I simply get the impression that this room has something different about it. Something neutral, and waiting.

Well. Not every fleeting experiment can excite me in the moment.

And then, with nothing else to do for now until the survivors begin to wake and go about their days, I return the dominant chunk of my focus to what is most important. **Distant Vision**, a spell I can maintain three whole casts of at a time without even impacting the supply of empty liquid it feeds upon. I don't use all three at first, instead starting as close to our fort as I can, and then moving outward, splitting my vision only when I can no longer easily cover the ground with a single use.

One, then two, then three bubbles of sight slide across the forest floor. I don't need light to see the colors and life, and while I am still on alert as I scout, I do enjoy these 'walks' of mine.

As for what I am looking for, it's three things. Monsters, the clearest threat that might lead us to other apparatus that we may have an easy time hunting and killing before they grow out of control. Survivors, the people that we need to grow, stabilize, and make our own place in the world. And anything useful. Sources of water, patches of useful plants, abandoned camps, secret buried grand devil treasure caches...

That last one might be wishful thinking.

This far into the Green, even as I move back the direction we came, life is everywhere. Small creatures, predator and prey, slink or sleep through the night; an owl cuts across one of my

spells with a silent flap that startles even me; bugs are everywhere around; and I imagine the cries and clicks of the various living things would easily cut away the silence of this search if I could hear.

But then I make it back to the wide river we had to cross, and the life fades away. The banks of the river are stripped of plant life, and there are signs of struggle along the banks that weren't there when we passed by. I pause, wondering if there's a way to make meaningful contact with the apparatus below the waters somehow, but can't think of anything. I move on in my scouting.

As I close in on where the first camp was, I start to push the limits of **Distant Vision**'s range. I also start to see more monsters, and less natural life. Red furred insects the size of horses scurry through the trees, I pass a half dozen things I now recognize as stone pylons that stir the dirt around them into those small clawed earth creatures, and everywhere, there is a sense of hostility and lifelessness. Some of the trees, even, look *wrong*. Like they've been warped somehow I can't quite put my thoughts on.

At the limits of my sight, and seeing nothing heading directly for us, I swing my spells around in an arc, taking in more and more of the forest in a quick blur that my mind struggles to keep up with, but that I still draw impressions from. I make marks on my wooden map back at the fort, translating the rough impression of how many lengths I have moved into landmarks and vectors for the others to study. Here is where these creatures live, here is where the trees turn sour, here is where our old camp was, here are the known apparatus locations...

And then I stop moving my vision spells. Because there are no more trees to see. Only an abrupt flat expanse of pale white stone lining the ground. But it's not stone, I see as I focus. It's vines or grass or fallen trees or... or bones. Calcified into something that flakes in the thin night breeze, the whole space lifeless and frozen.

I begin moving **Distant Vision** across it. And rapidly, I come to two conclusions. One, it is exactly one length across. *Exactly*. Exactly one unit of a measurement that no human or demon uses, that seems only relevant to the magic of my kind. And two, it is not an expanse. It is a line. As if someone reached down to the landscape and drew with a straight edge from point to point.

I check with the sleepy bee who is letting me borrow her eyes, back in my 'office' at the fort. I look over my map of lines and landmarks. And I place this line.

If it carries on in the direction it goes, it will intersect the first apparatus I found. The one that makes the violent silkspinnners, that was taking live captives, and that almost certainly tried to kill us.

I follow my vision to the end of it, to where it hasn't yet cut into the Green. As I do so, I pass over more of those black furred shapes, securing my theory about the origin. They walk the

white stone space with deliberate movements, heading down it like it's a road, built just for them. And at the end of that road, I find a whole host of them, slowly cutting with spiked limbs into the trees and ground of the landscape ahead of them.

And ten of them, the largest specimens of these monsters I've seen, standing in a circle, some kind of awkward harness strapped across them. And in their middle, held up by their long thin legs, is a pillar of assembled bone.

It doesn't take me long to determine where the line is going, because I already know that the fear I feel is the truth. But I confirm it anyway.

I suppose I did say that I worked best when I had a clear goal.