

Unnamed - Apparatus Of Change

Available Power : 6

Authority : 2

Bind Insect (1, Command)

Fortify Space (2, Domain)

Nobility : 2

Congea! Glimmer (1, Command)

See Domain (1, Perceive)

Empathy : 2

Shift Water (1, Shape)

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Spirituality : 3

Shift Wood (1, Shape)

Small Promise (2, Domain)

Make Low Blade (2, War)

Ingenuity : 2

Know Material (1, Perceive)

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Tenacity : 1

Nudge Material (1, Shape)

A morning of work and observation has left me with the majority of my spells drained down to very little left. But I find myself satisfied with everything I have accomplished.

The humans have found the armor I left for them. I tried to watch as best I could, but I have overtaxed my **Bind Insect** spell, and I merely got to watch their initial moments of confusion. Still, I can tell through the link to **Congea! Glimmer** that not only did they find the fourth stone I made, but they have begun to make use of it.

I am still unclear on what, exactly, glimmer do for humans. Across six lives, I have never seen their like. Though I have never seen anything like myself, either. We are far beyond the edge of the map, and with every new day and every new spell acquired I plunge deeper and deeper into the unknown territories where the strange and dangerous is commonplace. But the humans clearly think they are important, and from what I understand through observation, they impart or perhaps contain tiny spells of their own.

I do not know how. I did not make them that way. But I do not know where my own magic comes from, or why it is the way it is. I only know that it works, and I have not yet had time to examine the how of it all.

I am learning my own body, slowly. I cannot breathe, and do not need to regardless, but I have an action similar to that of a sigh. It is a refocusing; pruning away the pieces of knowledge that all my collective spells hand me, that my mind expands to understand all at once, to simply take

a moment to experience one singular thing. I perform this now, watching through **Know Material** as the count of wood ever so slightly erodes downward, and the count of ash rises in its place.

Watching the cook fire, taking a break. I cannot hear the crackle of flames, but I can see the waver of material as it decides if it is wood or not. I can feel the companionable motions of sharing a meal as bites of food leave the ledger.

But no break can last forever. And while I might have bought myself some time to rest and done more to help today than I was even able to before, I wish to be more involved. I wish to touch the world I am in, and share in the lives of those who live around me.

And that means that I cannot idly acquire power and let it sit unused.

A very long time ago, a young singer learned a hard lesson from a brutal father. That the one thing that was unacceptable was to have power, and fail to use it. Everything else could be excused or ignored, but *not* failure to act.

My past self's father was a monster who would fit right in alongside the strange red-furred corpses sitting at the edge of my senses. But he was not wrong, that power should not sit idle. I was new to this world, but I was gifted with many perspectives and many learned lessons, and it did not surprise me to decide upon this.

Everything I had done, I could do because I used my powers. As I cast spells and influenced the world, my capacity to continue to do so and to grow into new strength expanded. And as this happened, I found new ways and reasons to act.

Power beget power. This was always the way of things. But now, with no queens or laws or fathers to tell me otherwise, I had an opportunity. To grow my strength as I saw fit, and to plant for others a garden, and not cultivate a battlefield.

I have grown significantly, and there are more choices available to me now than ever before. And it takes only a flick of my mind to begin reviewing them. I start with **Empathy** and **Ingenuity**, the two souls that have spaces waiting for new spells to fill them back to capacity, to make me fully busy once more.

Empathy : 2
Shift Water (1, Shape)

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Available :
Feel Fear (1, Perceive)
Bind Willing Avian (1, Command)

Alarm Trigger (1, War)
Feel Love (2, Perceive)
Know Armament (2, Perceive)
Bind Fish (2, Command)

Ingenuity : 2
Know Material (1, Perceive)

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Available :
Collect Material (1, Shape)
Invite Low Mammal (1, Command)
Make Spike (1, War)
Form Wall (2, Shape)
Collect Focus (2, Civic)
See Lineage (2, Perceive)

First things first.

I am no longer alive, in the same way I once was. I do not know what I am, but I am rapidly learning one thing. I am entirely capable of *feeling*. It is not the raw emotion of pumping blood and screaming nerves, of short breath and warm touches. But neither is the way I feel entirely cold. I experience the world in a way that is clearer, sharper, but still my own.

And now I know that being insufferably smug is an emotion that still lies waiting within me, like a hunting paru, just itching for the right moment to pounce.

Bind Fish is a real spell. I knew it. I was so absolutely certain, even as I said it as a joke, what feels like a lifetime ago. And now, vindication. The truth of my words is no longer a jest, but simple reflection of reality.

I will not be taking **Bind Fish**. I do not need a fish. I don't know what I would... well, I could think of a few things I would do with a fish. But I do not need that responsibility on my mind.

In truth, nothing from **Empathy** strikes me as something I wish to pursue at the moment. I have no way to invite a bird to my coterie, even if that would be a major boon to my ability to see things. The perception abilities strike me more as ways to track people than to work with fine detail or explore the world, and I find that uncomfortable. **Feel Love** again makes me question if I can feel that emotion without the spell, but as already established, I did not need **Feel Fear** to feel quite a bit of fear, so I am not worried.

Perhaps the singer's father would be disappointed, but I choose to be miserly with the power pooling in me when it comes to **Empathy**. For now, at least. I am sure the next crisis will push me to try something new and risky.

Ingenuity offers something that I should have taken far earlier, and put to work. And while I would love to explore the civic spells that are increasingly being offered to me, there is a simple question of security at play here. The people who have trusted me must *survive*, before we can collectively thrive.

Two points of power spent, leaving me with four remaining, and **Form Wall** is suddenly a part of my collective soul.

I immediately set it to work, to see what my options are. A small test of my new arcana. And what I quickly find is that I may have made an error in guesswork.

Much like **Make Low Blade** last night, the spell fills my mind with something that is half-desire half-demand. Material, it clamors for. Not material in the way **Know Material** categorizes the various units of raw matter around me, but material in that it wants something to build a wall *with*. Wood or stone, brick or chitin, it does not care, it just needs to know what it shall work with.

Stone seems the obvious choice, and so, I feed the spell's request through **Know Material** and point it at the stockpile of stone that happens to be sitting under the dirt all around us.

The spell gives me the emotional feeling of a caravan laborer nodding and rolling up her sleeves, before it goes to work. And, promptly, burns the entire vial of empty liquid that powers it, to no effect.

Almost right away, I see where I have erred. The stone I pointed it toward is underground, and even if I asked for nothing more than a one length long segment of wall, the strength required to pull uncut stone from deep within the dirt is something beyond my magics at the moment. I am, even with my most powerful spells, still barely as strong as a young adult. I am certainly not a match for a quarry.

The spell is exhausted now, though, and I will need to wait to experiment more. I follow with my mind's eye to where I had pointed it, trying to see at least if my action has disturbed any more of the motes that my body soaks up to fill me with more points of power, but I find only darkness. I have exhausted a part of myself, for nothing.

Well, not nothing, of course. I have learned. Every piece of knowledge is just as useful as every flickering mote of power.

I turn my attention back to those points of power. Four remaining, and options open to me. I consider.

I could continue to advance one of my souls. **Nobility** especially calls to me, the knowledge that my glimmer is valuable to the humans in our shared clearing makes it appealing to make that spell even more potent. And the additional opening for a new spell would be welcome as well, though as none of the current options call to me strongly, I would be hoping that a new choice would be more useful in the future.

But there is another option. **Tenacity** has lagged behind my other souls, despite having one of my first spells, and one that sees constant use. But **Nudge Material** is, as a general magic, much less potent than anything else I have since learned. And I haven't even felt the need to continue digging myself a hole.

Perhaps if it *were* stronger, I could use it to break up and unearth some amount of stone. I say I am no match for a quarry, but what if I were?

Not only that, but it would take one point to elevate the soul, and two more to choose a new spell for it. And that is something I can do this very instant. No waiting or worry required.

The thought appeals to me. It appeals so much that I take the step, farther off the charted map, without much regret at all.

Tenacity : 2
Nudge Material (1, Shape)

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Available :
Domain Map (1, Perceive)
Subvert Low Summon (1, Command)
Drain Endurance (1, War)
Bolster Nourishment (2, Civic)
Separate Material (2, Shape)
Pressure Trigger (2, War)

A match for a quarry, indeed. **Separate Material** seems to be an answer to that highly specific wish.

And yet. It will not be my choice. Not now, at any rate.

My bees do not afford me sight that I can rely upon. But their eyes are good enough. And through them, I have seen children with too-thin arms, and too-pale faces. Sluggish movements and blank stares. The aftereffects of not only forced flight, but something far worse.

Malnourishment. Rationing, hunger. Not quite starvation, no. But a lack of stable food that writes a history all its own.

To be hungry is a pain that cannot be understated. A gnawing hurt that feels all at once like a wound, a self hatred, and a bitter anger. Given enough time, hunger will consume a person beyond anything that food will recover.

Tenacity : 2
Nudge Material (1, Shape)
Bolster Nourishment (2, Civic)

I zero in on the location of their food reserves through **Know Material**. Meat and grain and a tiny amount of fruit. I exclude the meat; I think a lot of it comes from the dead monsters that no one seems to be interested in butchering. But to the rest, I spill out the magic of **Bolster Nourishment** with no interest in holding back.

I feel it take hold. I do not know, exactly, how far it will stretch. But I do know that if I can repeat this, every day, that their meals will stretch farther. Their hunger will abate, bit by bit.

It is no defended wall, it is no magical sword. But this is a security that underlines all others. The freedom to begin to feel strong enough to try.

I will need to let them know. I will try, tomorrow, when I awaken, to open a line of communication. The written word, hopefully, will be enough.

For now, well and truly satisfied with my work, I sleep.