

Unnamed - Apparatus Of Change
Available Power : 10

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)

We mean to make you welcome here. Are my first words to the gobs as they come back through the gate with Kalip. **Small Promise** going a long way to making an intention known in truth.

Something about it, or perhaps the nature of these three new people as being so young, makes the promise resonate almost instantly. Before I know it, a small waterfall of power has come

from them, flowing through the channel of **Small Promise** and back to me in a rapid flood. Though not *just* through that spell. It seems to come through a half dozen of my spells. **Bind Insect, Distant Vision, Shift Wood, Link Spellwork**, everything I happened to use to aid Kalip in his sortie out to fetch them. I do not think this is a coincidence. Nor do I think that this moment is either. The final spell that concludes their induction into our home, as they enter the fort that we have claimed? It's a metaphorical boundary stone being passed. And it seems the world's magic itself responds to it.

In the adjunct's office on the second level of the fort, a room that is only partially cleared but also has no use right now except as a place for some of my bees to find a cool spot to nap, I **Shift Wood** a note for myself into the wall. The wall is filling up quickly with my notes on my own magic, and my attempt to understand.

But I do not linger. Especially as I notice myself being moved; the ranges on my perceptions wobbling in that almost-nauseating fashion. A tenday ago, this would have terrified me, but by now, I am mostly of the mind that this is most likely Seraha shifting me to a different seat to adapt to her sufficiently arcane table settings.

To my surprise, as I ask one of the largest bees to share with me their sight, I find it is Yuea hauling my body out of the dining hall entirely. The spot where I have been comfortably in the middle of the life of the fort now vacated.

Excuse me. I write the words at eye level next to her as the bee buzzes ahead and lands on the edge of the door to the kitchen where she seems to be taking me. She walks past without reading. *Yuea!* I scribe her name abruptly on the door itself as she kicks it open with a leg that isn't as tough as she remembers, but still gets the job done.

"Oh, relax." She scoffs at me. "Just gonna set you out of sight for a chunk while we feed our new friends. Don't want them freaking out when they see you."

That's a terrible idea! I try to rapidly write, **Shift Wood** coming across as a child's scrawl as my aim wavers with every step she takes. I wrap the text around to the other side of the door as Yuea passes into the kitchen. *This is my home too! Don't just hide me! Yuea!*

She ignores my writing, and I consider having the bee assault her hair. Technically, this isn't the worst fate; I can still see the whole fort, all of my magic still works, everything is *fine*. It is simply that I feel... suddenly very small. Shoved between a sack of flour and a bin of onion bulbs, kept out of sight so I don't scare anyone, I feel suddenly like I am not quite as close to the survivors as I had thought.

Nevermind the fact that the gobs will already know that I, or something at least like me, exists here. **Small Promise** not only was offered, it was accepted and took root. I contain the two new points of power to prove it. This is the principle of the thing. The fact that Yuea seems to

think that I'm naturally something to be afraid of, that simply explaining won't be enough. It's... insulting. Demeaning.

Also Yuea of all people should know it's futile. Shoving me behind the stove won't stop me from being present at the gob's first meal here with us.

It's interesting, almost. Ever since I have been born as this new thing, my emotions have been easier to *observe*, to understand the process of. And I can see now as I, for the first time in this life, find myself sulking. It would make me laugh, if I had that power; six old lives and one new one and I'm still capable of being a child, mad that I was sent away from the table for being a bother.

Well. I suppose I could spend my afternoon sitting here, with a bee investigating the kitchen that it's found itself suddenly loosed in, feeling sorry for myself. Or, I could get back to what I truly had planned for my day.

The extra two points of power make my decision even easier. And with a thought, the fourth open place in the soul of **Nobility** is filled with magic. Something distant and outside of myself pouring the knowledge into me in the fastest moment; so quickly that even the thought that there was some agency to it might have been my mind playing tricks on me. **Stone Pylon**, one of the second set of spells available, is now mine to play with.

And alongside it comes two things. First, another burst of motes of power, driven by my completed promise to hold to the advice of my peers about my magic. Not quite enough to restore one of the spent points, but enough to make me more comfortable in my ability to react to adversity. And second, shaken loose from the depths of the soul, comes something else.

I close my spells that connect me to the world, letting myself slip peacefully into the dark of the memory.

It's unlike anything we've ever seen before. If I had thought that fieldwork was a waste before, it was the greatest failing of my time studying in the Tower. This journey, to a forgotten ruin, has been more than enough to justify it. I ignore the sand scraping against the tight robe I wear, as my companions and I stare up at the pillar. "All this time, and still here." One of them says. The walls around us are little more than random stones, only barely reminiscent of the structures they once were. There is nothing here, save this lone monument. "Would have been a hell of a big brother for you, huh?" My friend asks me jovially. "I somehow doubt this is a tool." I reply, stepping forward to trace the lines, almost freshly carved, on the surface. "Ah, but what better tool, than declaring to the future that you were here?" She says. We laugh together, before we fall silent. There is work to be done, and a history to uncover here. Weeks of transcription and research, pitting our minds against the fog of the past. We set up our camp, prepared to do battle as scholars do; with word, and wit, in the shadow of something older than we've ever known.

I come back to myself slowly, still feeling the sand underneath my curved and pebbled feet.

So many of these memories I happen to live are of *conflict*. My old lives were, all too often, harsh and hostile. This small moment of contentment, of facing a peaceful challenge, is invigorating, and reassuring in equal measure.

And now, a new spell.

Stone Pylon is fascinating. I still do not understand what the workings of my spells are accomplishing, or how they tug and pull at the fabric of the world. But I can see certain things now as I examine them. Things I have learned through comparison of other spells.

I can see this one requires materials to work with, which only makes sense. I will need to offer a not insignificant amount of stone to it to build what it wants to make. I can also see, though, something else. A keyhole in the working, similar to what I've seen before with **Bind Insect** and its ability to accept **Congea Glimmer** into itself. But larger, more critical. This is not an *option*, this is a function of the spell itself.

Part of why I had wanted **Stone Pylon** was because I have seen things like it before. Shaped from dirt or bone, yes, but I recognize the intent behind them. The other apparatus have used them, with the first enemy I found having built *several*. My siblings might be mad beasts in many regards, but their actions seem as deliberate as my own, and I wish now to test the nature of this magic.

I send a few bees looking for reasonable spots, lamenting the loss of my crows. Their eyes and wings would have been far better suited to this. But still, it is not long before I find a decent place for my first test. A pile of rubble from one of the fort's interior walls, behind the backyard well that I cleared when we first settled here. Bricks and mortar, stone enough to work with I am sure.

All that remains, as I begin to spin the magic into the world, is to choose what spell I wish to add to the mix. I grudgingly settle on **Nudge Material**, as though I am certain this isn't the best choice, it is the spell I am most willing to give up should something go wrong, and this is, after all, simply a test.

Then all that is left is to nudge the world with my intent, and watch things set to motion.

The bricks collect themselves, chunks carving themselves down to flat sides of the growing pillar as the material stacks up. Slowly at first, then quicker and quicker as the magic takes hold. Like a hand of a playing god, the loose stone and rock in the small courtyard is plucked up and dripped down into a lopsided stalagmite of collected stone. The rock almost flows like liquid as the spell works itself upon the world, but then quickly becomes immobile once again after it passes.

Then it is done. An ugly post of rock, standing behind a well. I think, judging by how much of the supply of stamina it took to make this, that it would have taken several days if my **Nobility** soul was not as elevated as it is. I also think that perhaps I should have tried to guide the spell just a little more. It reminds me of my early attempts with **Form Wall**; the magic will do its work to the bare minimum of what it takes to be called a wall, unless *someone* intervenes. And unfortunately, that someone must be me.

Next time, I will try to make something a little more architecturally sound. I will also need to see if that changes the outcome.

Now, though, I focus on the tether between the spell and my mind. There is certainly something there now, and I quickly check to see that **Nudge Material** still sits at near its full capacity, unaffected by its use as a component except for a minor expenditure. The pylon, though, is *asking me a question*.

Not like my bees ask, especially not like the survivors ask. It's more... like another part of the spell's requirements. It's asking in the same way the magic asked for stone, or asked for a target.

And it wants to know what to do with **Nudge Material**.

I let the information from the tether fully unfold in my mind, and I marvel at what I've been neglecting this whole time. The pylon contains a copy of the entirety of the spell, complete with its own reservoir of the empty liquid that I naturally build up to cast my magics. Its supply is empty now, but I can already see tiny drops beginning to fill it. And I can guess, from the size of the flask, that this is equivalent to when my own soul was at its first step.

I somehow doubt the pylon can grow, as I did. But I am hesitant to declare that definitively.

I also have no reasonable idea what to tell it to *do* now. **Nudge Material** has done a great deal of work for me, but I chose it now because it is the *least useful* of my spells, and I could stand to lose it if something had gone wrong. So I simply tell the pylon to gather its strength, and wait.

And then my mind begins racing.

How many uses are there, for *more of my own magic*? A pylon that produces a daily supply of glimmer, leaving me free to use my own spell to enhance my bees? A pylon that automatically fetches water, or harvests crops, or calls to every passing bird?

A line of pylons, surrounding the valley, that sing **Small Promise** oaths to anyone passing, letting them know that this is a safe place. A second ring, echoing **Drain Endurance**, that make sure those who do not accept the promise never make it far enough to harm my people.

This was a *second step spell*. This, this... weapon. This massive addition to my own growth, this changes *everything*. And I could have had it since only a few days after waking? All I need is a supply of stone, and carefully worded instructions, and I could do... *so much more*. I could help everyone. I could save everyone.

I assume, naturally, there is some form of limitation to this magic that will aggravate me endlessly when I discover it. But that is a problem for my future self.

The bee that is with me prods me for attention, and I fix my sight back on the kitchen. Seraha is shifting around, collecting knives and pots and I hear her telling someone to start fetching her water. She gives the growing and glowing bee a confused but polite nod as she comes near my stashed body to collect some of the onions, and jumps in surprise when she spots me, holding one thick paw to her chest.

“Wh... why are you in here?” She asks me with a rush of breath. Before I can answer, her eyes narrow, and she looks around the room, spotting the trail of my writing on the wall and door from where Yuea carried me out of the dining hall. I quickly try to smooth out the wall with **Shift Wood**, but Seraha’s already seen enough. “Yuea...” She hisses out, setting down what she’s carrying and picking up a flat wooden spoon, stalking over to the door to the meal hall, and shoving it open with one arm. My bee sends me a questioning impulse, and I catch the words “Petulant child-!” Before the door swings shut again and the elder demoness strides out of the room.

I tell my bee that I’m not exactly sure what’s going on. But that we should just hide here for a little bit, until it all blows over.

Every life from the soldier to the cleric has memories that make me think that an old woman with a spoon is quite possibly the most dangerous thing in any given place. And right now, I’d rather be behind Seraha than in front of her.

“Oh, hey sparkles.” Dipan says, my attention drawn to the man as he sets down a pair of water buckets. “Did Seraha leave?”

There is a crash, and yelling, from past the kitchen door. *You should probably just get more water*. I write on the edge of one of the buckets.

“That’s a *great* idea.” My friend says. “Do you want a lift out?” I decide that I like Dipan. I hadn’t thought much of it, but the scarred man is so openly earnest with everything he does, it’s hard not to feel comfortable around him.

Thank you, no. I write. *I have magic to do*.

“Ah, right. There’s a big thing out by the well. Is that...?”

It's fine.

“Polished.” He nods to me. And then again to my bee. “Well, good luck!” Dipan makes a hasty retreat as the shouting intensifies.

I'm not sure why exactly I didn't take his offer. But right now, this feels deeply familiar. Like a chaotic mess of a *family*. Like... like I'm actually starting to belong here, as something deeper than another moving part in the function of life. And with that in mind, I think I can weather any small argument.

It especially helps that I can distract myself with magic while I wait.