

**Unnamed - Apparatus Of Change**

**Available Power : 4**

**Authority : 2**

**Bind Insect (1, Command)**

**Fortify Space (2, Domain)**

**Nobility : 2**

**Congeal 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)**

**Form Wall (2, Shape)**

**Tenacity : 2**

**Nudge Material (1, Shape)**

**Bolster Nourishment (2, Civic)**

I have learned things from my humans. Through an excessive exertion of small magics, the hard work of the eyes of my honeybees, and the memories of minds that spent their whole lives studying the written word to help me translate, we have shared with each other information that is of great importance.

The glimmer empowers them. I do not know how; we lack the words for that, *for now*. But it gives them something that, if I understand their gestures and writings, makes them stronger. More than stronger, more capable. But while the details of it still escape me, it makes sense why these people, who have been fleeing destruction for almost a full cycle, would cling to the hope they offer.

They have been running for almost a cycle. And they are the last of what used to be a much larger group. I think. Again, I am trying to interpret language with no way to easily tell them what I do not understand. But they are the remnants of several townships that have all burned. A natural disaster, I thought at first. But then I remember the monsters.

The corpses have been disposed of; the humans didn't even touch the meat, but the armored woman was smart enough to keep the bones in a pile that I could reach, even without my asking. Still, those bones serve as a reminder, that the world has become somewhat more dangerous than when any of my past selves lived.

I have so many questions, but lack the stamina to ask all of them in a single day. A single season might not be enough. I consider, my thoughts turning traitor on my plans, that perhaps I should invest my power back into my **Tenacity**. It would not be too much of a setback; a mere few days, at most, to regain what I would spend. And it would expand **Nudge Material** to the point that I could write more than three sentences each day.

But no! I must persevere! There is a vista at the end of my climb, and the near literal nature of how the old idiom fits my desire to see *the world* with my own eyes pushes me to make the difficult choice to simply *be patient*.

Patience was easy, when there was nothing to look forward to and no one to talk to. When it was only the abstract, the idea that I would, eventually, become more capable. Now, though, with more things stacking themselves onto my collection of desired paths, I find that my patience was not a result of my new form, but simply because I had no other option. And now I want to advance *now*, and not in some potential tomorrow.

One more point of power, and **Distant Vision** can be mine. And everything after that can be negotiated with the structure of fate.

Power comes to me easily now. From **Congea! Glimmer**, I can feel what is almost a steady trickle, and I can follow that back to where it is simply tiny motes from the individual stones I have made. **Make Low Blade** also contributes, from the tether of the one bone knife I have made; and soon it will offer even more.

But I find that, while those sources continue to grow and bolster my collective soul, others have gone dry, like a lake in a drought. **Know Material** used to shake loose those motes from everything it brushed against. Not many, but it was from where I first saw them emerge, and the absence now that I have begun to better learn to see is concerning. **Bind Insect** had offered some new touches as I took up command of my new bees, but as with the original batch, after a few days, that supply has dimmed and slowed. **Small Promise** had given me some from my attempts to help with chores, and a small burst when I expended a use of **Bolster Nourishment** on the honey of the beehive I had sworn to do right by, but this is not a reliable source of my growth. **Shift Wood** and **Shift Water** offer some, when I do use them, which makes sense to me as I am not simply moving the same wood or water every day. And I think there, the secret opens to me.

It is not simply the use of my magic, but the use of it upon new things, new situations, that shakes loose those motes my body pulls inward.

And with that secret, I have another thought, with a grim implication. The last couple days, though productive and offering a steady source of new power, have been barely half the income in the lever compared to one night of fire and blood.

I have learned one more thing from the humans, and that is that we work well together when we *can* communicate.

Two of the adults had, after they realized what I was asking, marked out a space near the central campfire. Then, they headed slightly downstream, wielding a shovel that I had taken the liberty of marking with **Shift Wood** to repair a crack in the handle. It had been an hour before they returned, but I had noticed them the instant they came back, because with them, they brought something novel into range of **Know Material**.

Clay.

They dumped what they'd brought on a makeshift sled of branches near the lines they'd marked, and then, after taking some of the cleaned water and a small bit of fruit, headed out again.

The other adults were busy, but I saw through my watcher bees that a couple of the children took notice, and perked up. It had only been a handful of days, and one of those days had been violent and terrifying, but the children were all starting to recover. They watched things instead of blankly staring or sleeping. They poked and prodded around the camp, and even if they weren't running with exuberant verve, they were still *alive* in a way they hadn't shown before.

I noticed them watching the adults through my bees when I was trying to **Shift Wood** the sled into something that would hold together and be a bit easier on the legs. A childish curiosity that not even life or death peril could fully quash.

And a thought struck me. If it was safe enough, why not give them a small adventure outside the camp? Of course, the adults were working. Presumably digging in the shallows around the stream where clay had formed near the surface. But that didn't mean they had to be without an escort.

**Authority** was going to be advanced anyway. And now was a perfect time to invest the two points of power and feel the swell of magics expanding and growing within me. And then, before I could be distracted by the new arcana offered by the structure of my souls, I reached out for **Bind Insect**, the newly expanded urn of nothingness it drank from much more full than I would have expected given how many bees I had under my command. And with that increase in scope, also, an increase in *range*.

A handful of honeybees, small fuzzy dots against the summer sky, bobbed their way over to the watching children. One of them made as if to swat one of the insects down, but the other boy stopped her; I think perhaps he was the one I had tried to comfort prior.

I was learning a light touch to the command of my bees. I didn't need to dominate them, not really. Instead, I could give them soft orders. Go here, explore this, watch this for me. And

now, I gave them a new push that was previously beyond me. Follow these two, they are your friends.

The bees, only half under my orders, alighted softly on the tangled and dirty hair of the two children. One each, while the others formed a small loop, and then bobbed their way through the air slightly toward where the older humans were preparing to head out again for more clay.

It took a few repeats to get the message across, but when I did, they moved almost eagerly. The adults gave them worried looks, but the presence and precision of my insect companions made it clear that my touch was at play. And without any argument I could see, the children were brought along to help.

I kept an eye on them, partially because I wanted to make sure they would have a way back if they got lost, but also because I wished to see where the clay was and how much was available. As it turns out, honeybees are not the best at seeing underwater, even in the shallows, but especially when those shallows are made murky by hands and a shovel.

The kids helped some, explored and played slightly more, and did not return for the third or fourth trip. But by that night, with a little extra help, and the casualty of one new shovel I tried to make with **Shift Wood**, there was a substantial pile of two units and six parts of clay, sitting in our camp.

**Form Wall** came easy, the spell fully refreshed. I gave it what it asked for; dimensions and an impulse, material to work with, and, in an experiment that I hoped I would not regret, I added something else. **Congea! Glimmer**, cast not separate from anything else, but *into* the workings of another spell as it activated and began its effortless alteration.

The empty liquid that both spells drank began to drop, replaced by a different kind of nothing. But out in the world, through the eyes of my bees, I watched a construction come together. **Know Material** informing me, bit by bit, unrefined clay was removed from my range of sense, as the substance changed from being simple clay to being a *structure*.

It wasn't impressive. The old soldier had memories of squads assembling more defensible palisades in the time it took me to make one wall. But this one was *mine*. Clay rose up in a ring, leaving an archway gap for a door. It couldn't make a roof with just this spell, but the humans could handle that part. My role was to push the clay to compact, smooth, to siphon out all the moisture in just the right way to turn it to *brick*.

There was no mortar for this small building, and the spell told me it wouldn't last as long because of it. But it also told me something else, as **Congea! Glimmer** finished its own work.

The new gemstone I had just made from nothing but my magic was set neatly into the clay at the peak of the arch. And it drew in something, from the clay around it. Grey and brown motes that swirled in the gem's interior, and turned it into something different.

And just like I could see when the humans or even bees used my glimmer, the colored motes slipping through their bodies before returning purified, I could see this glimmer's touch moving through the wall itself.

I didn't know what it would do. But it was something *more* than just a simple clay walled hut. Lacking a roof and a door, yes, but possessed of something that echoed slightly in one of the senses that I didn't fully know how to listen to yet.

The humans cheered in the flickering light of the fire as my spell finished and the building came together. I couldn't hear them, but I could see thrown up arms, friendly jostles, and at least one hug. The children showed no fear of the new building, crawling through the open door to peer around the small interior. The armored man, still recovering from his own near death experience, approached the two who had brought me my clay, and offered them a drink from a small glass bottle he pulled from somewhere in his outfit.

I couldn't even smell, and that stuff was potent enough to make the eyes I no longer had water. That was the kind of drink that would grow your horns an extra inch.

I wished I could have shared in the celebration more than I did. But **Bind Insect** had gotten a true workout today, and I let my bees go so it could recover. Opting to leave the humans to their revel, and retreat back to my inner darkness. To steady myself, enjoy my bounding emotions, and watch the small motes drift toward me from the work I had done and the stir I had caused.

A point of power manifests within me, taking root with a flush of warmth that reaches through my crystal shell.

I know what I must do now.

**Authority : 3**

**Bind Insect (1, Command)**

**Fortify Space (2, Domain)**

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**Available :**

**See Rank (1, Perceive)**

**Shift Dirt (1, Shape)**

**Drop Trigger (1, War)**

**Distant Vision (2, Perceive)**

**Shift Metal (2, Shape)**

**Make Clothing (3, Shape)**

**Know Abstract (3, Perceive)**

**Collect Plant (3, Shape)**

No. You cannot tempt me. Clothing can come later when there is real fabric to work with, abstracts do not need me to peer upon them to go about their business, and the plants can be managed by human hands. Give me my eyes. Let me see the world that I have rejoined.

**Authority : 3**

**Bind Insect (1, Command)**

**Fortify Space (2, Domain)**

**Distant Vision (2, Perceive)**

I open a new eye, and I *look*.