

**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 : 5**

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

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

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

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

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

**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 : 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)***

The first step is reestablishing contact. **Distant Vision**, the first spell I learned to multicast, to move, to *play with*, I now rapidly and effectively scour across the terrain until I find a landmark and orient myself. From there, it takes very little time to find the path the silkspinnners are leaving behind.

Well, in a way.

What I find instead is nothing. That same kind of sharp cutoff to my magic that, when I fail to react fast enough with the first cast, erodes the entire cast of **Distant Vision** and leaves me confused as to where my sight went.

Probing rapidly reveals the situation. The 'road' through the Green that the silkspinnners left, like some ancient saber swiping across the forest floor, is blank to me. **Distant Vision** cannot penetrate it, just like the other apparatus' home all those days-that-feel-as-years ago. It doesn't take me long to learn that it stretches the entire length, and is steadily expanding at the forefront of their invasion. Though I can see the edge of the devastation ahead of the blank space, and occasionally bits of the form of a silkspinner, all dark fur and knife legs.

The conclusion is worrying, but I believe understandable with the information I have. Just as my enemy made pylons that spread this... destruction? Corruption? Calcification. It has now also made one that spreads **Fortify Space**. And then, sent that forward, carried like the other by its silkspinner army.

This most likely means there are more of the monsters hidden from me as well. That would make, how many now? Thirty? Forty? More?

My strategy shifts.

The soldier's memories help me. So do the merchant's, oddly. First, I define an objective. I need this invasion stopped, and the enemy dead or incapable of committing violence. Next, obstacles. Distance is one, followed by the bulwark it has up now, and the number of actual enemies. So, first and foremost, I must overcome those obstacles.

My tools are my spells, and my soldiers. Bees and beetles, though the beetles, despite becoming ever more perceptive, are not exactly fighters. And there ends my soldiery. Kalip is crippled until I alter him, Yuea is still missing an arm, *everyone* is injured in some way, excepting Mela and Muelly, who are not fighters at all.

Those are some fairly powerful tools, though. Oh, and there is one more. *Knowledge*. Everything I have learned from this new life is valid, and useful, and I can put it to work. For example, I know that the other apparatus *has spells*. Just like me. Or at least, they have something similar for me to steal. And whatever they have that blocks my sight certainly seems to operate very similarly to **Fortify Space**. A spell which, when I use it, paints a place in my domain, and then fills that domain with the magic.

Of course, domains *break*, don't they?

I do quick sandmath, and determine that the road is now within a day's travel for my larger bees. Though they will need rest before any action. Deploying them is the first order of the day.

Along with their passengers. Using **Bind Insect**, through the strange almost-tethers of the bound and mantra enhanced queen, I collect two hundred new bees. Not enough to deplete the growing and thriving hive in any way that matters, but more than enough for my purposes. I hope.

The hive is the first stop of the larger bees as they leave the fort. I consider sending all of them. But... even if I did not still need mobile eyes at home... I do not think that any amount of bloodthirsty I could personally muster would push me to tear the ones that are imprinted on the children from their charges.

It takes very little time for my new bound small bees to board their far larger sisters. Nestling into thick fur like homegrass, clinging tightly as the larger bees take to the sky in a flock. There are thirty eight of them, including those that were injured fighting the wolv, now fully recovered as I had hoped. Several of them carry small bags loaded with their water filled arrowheads; a weapon that will hopefully be more useful against something with thinner hide.

As they fly, I work on two things. One, I talk to them. The bees are still getting smarter, and our bond has been built from nothing upward, which affords quite a lot of flexibility in communication. I'm hoping that one day, my bond with Yuea matches that. But for now, I talk to my bees, answering small questions from them, and also working with them to form a set of broad orders.

They will need to operate while out of range of **Bind Insect**, and perhaps while under a hostile **Fortify Space**. They need to know not just what to do, but why. So we talk, and plan, and their simple yet growing minds work to understand their objective in a way that no enemy cast of **Sever Command** could interrupt.

The other thing I do is far, far less intellectually intensive. I have mentioned before that I can split my focus, and that is technically true; I can apply my mind to as many things as I can think about. Multitasking is blissfully easy. If I wish to cast a spell eight times at once, I can do it. If I wish to cast a spell eight times at once that I need to carefully guide, I... will have some trouble.

But hauling out chunks of rock with **Nudge Material** is not at all mentally taxing.

I have found a point that is, if the silkspinnners continue in a straight line, a little under a length away from where they will pass in two days time. Close to our fort, closing in. But not directly in their path. Near enough though. It is where my bees are heading; a mustering area. It is also on the very inner edge of **Distant Vision's** range. So close to us.

Currently, I am using **Link Spellwork** to target **Nudge Material** through **Distant Vision**. I believe I am beginning to understand **Link Spellwork** more fully, and am disappointed by its limits. It does not truly create novel magics; instead, it is a way of allowing one spell to target another spell, instead of what it originally was meant for. Often, this creates strange effects, perhaps unintended or chaotic ones. Sometimes, it is simply useful to be able to cast at range.

I will need to conserve it all the same; making pylons is intensive. Though I am not bothering to carve the stone into the 'proper shape' of a pylon before making use of it. Just shoving aside the upper layer of soil and dead plant matter, and dragging up chunks of rock. It's challenging, but far less challenging than trying to use **Nudge Material** to actually cut anything; something the spell is absolutely not suited for.

**Stone Pylon** uses quite a lot of its own stockpiled empty liquid for a few things, I'm noticing. Shaping and setting the stone it works with is one of them. If I do that work in advance, it costs less from **Stone Pylon** itself. But **Link Spellwork** costs mount quickly when using something as small as **Nudge Material**, so I don't bother.

There is a good deal of stone at the spot I have chosen. Some kind of broken granite, down in the basin of a depression. The thick greenery growing around it and the layer of dirt at the bottom of the small dip in the terrain doing nothing to hide a trio of large boulders that drew my attention. After the first few chunks of it I pull up, I realize that the ground underneath is more chunks than solid strata. Like something shattered this area long ago, and it has been buried but not repaired; the pottery of the world just covering its damages.

I stop trying to pull stone up, and instead, just shove the dirt away, **Collect Plant** to snatch away trees with inconvenient roots and layers of grass and moss. And then, I invest some of my power. Raising **Nobility** to the sixth step leaves me with four power to spare, which is nothing at all to me at this point. It is only a matter of time before I have more, but time is something I lack now. Which is why I have expanded the soul that governs how quickly I can craft **Stone Pylons**.

Quickly, I check what has become available to me. There is no reason to not have a plan, for when I need it in the future.

**Nobility : 6**

**Available :**

***Shift Stone (1, Shape)***

***Lock Portal (1, War)***

***Know Resource (2, Perceive)***

***Know Stone (3, Perceive)***

***Make Low Tool (3, Shape)***

***Mark Threshold (3, Domain)***

*Improve Tool (4, Shape)*  
*Imbue Motion (4, Civic)*  
*Spawn Golem (5, Command)*  
*Shape Stone (5, Shape)*  
*Draw Text (5, Shape)*  
*Marking Trap (6, War)*  
*Instill Low Disease (6, War)*

Almost certainly, I want **Shape Stone**. Simply for flexibility and for making this job less soul numbing and somewhat faster. **Spawn Golem** is also a strong contender. I refuse to have anything to do with a magic that creates disease, though, on ethical grounds, and so I dismiss that out of hand.

With that out of the way, I start to work **Stone Pylon** into the area. **Link Spellwork** drains rapidly, and I consider spending the rest of my power to improve **Ingenuity**, but it comes back quickly enough. The first two pylons don't use the unearthed rock, instead being formed from the broken chunks still mostly buried. It makes little difference. As soon as each of them finish, I bestow them with **Congee Glimmer** and simply have them get to work creating a pile of the magical stone in the open.

Then I realize my miscalculation. I don't have enough of **Link Spellwork** to haul stone chunks several lengths, and then make more pylons where I want them. Not with how much **Nudge Material** takes, constantly. But, strangely, my connection to the pylons cares little for distance, and it doesn't take much time for me to change one of them to **Nudge Material** itself. It starts from nothing, which will require even more time, and it's *weak* compared to me, but it is a distant hand that I can make use of.

Albeit a rather stupid hand. I must continually update its poor aim to begin dragging chunks of stone across the ground toward the approaching path of the silkspinnners. It does not distinguish by material, or size, or anything truly. The most I can do is tell it a direction, which isn't good enough. So, I use a tiny bit of my slowly refreshing **Link Spellwork** to adapt a new spell. **Pressure Trigger**. Which I place under the large rock, then mentally tether to the pylon, then nudge the rock forward.

This works, as I repeat it several times, though it does lead to me rolling my supply of stone across the ground, and wasting **Link Spellwork** to **Collect Plant** away trees that get in the way.

But eventually, I have what I need. And when I have the materials assembled and the magic regained, I use **Stone Pylon** yet again, this one placed almost completely flush with the bark of a particularly large tree perhaps a half length from their projected path, if my guess is correct. This one, I grant **Drain Endurance** to, and leave it to collect strength.

This tedious and frustrating task, I repeat. Again, and again. **Stone Pylon** is invigorated by the expansion of my **Nobility** soul, to the point that in any other situation I would feel that it would

be excessive. If I had taken the spell when it was first offered, it would have taken days to complete a single instance. When I did end up selecting it, I could manage once a day, with some left over. Now, that number is five. It seems to scale similar to the nature of **Congel Glimmer**, and I wonder briefly if I could make a *larger Stone Pylon*.

I do not wonder too much, though. Nor do I speak to the others at home in the fort. They know, through Kalip, that I am working on something. They trust me, somehow. Impossibly somehow. And I do not wish to betray that trust. So I put every piece of my mind into the task of building these defenses.

By the time my bees arrive, a swarm descending onto the space I had pointed them at, I have created nine pylons. Two of them have been doing nothing but producing glimmer, while the others are concealed behind trees or other natural barriers along the path of the incoming 'road'. One of the glimmer pylons I switched to **Bolster Nourishment** two candles ago, using the very last of **Link Spellwork** to cast my first **Pressure Trigger** near it. The spell is so very strange; it shifts a thin layer of material upward, and I am glad I did it with loose stone and not dirt or something that would fall apart quickly. After that, it has an almost *shouting* quality to it. Like it exists to connect to other magic.

I will need to study it further. For now, I am simply trying to maximize my own intake of power, while accomplishing an important logistical task. I reach to the strands between the trigger and the pylon, and connect them, hoping this works as planned, as I have no way to update my bees if it does not. The result is, as I am glad to see actually functions, that the larger bees will drag foraged fruits and berries to the **Pressure Trigger**, which will cause the **Stone Pylon** to **Bolster Nourishment** upon them.

My bees need every scrap of food they can, especially so far from me that they can't draw heavily on my magic, and after such a long flight. They're not marathon fliers, but they made the trip without complaint. I love them so much, and I hope I am not about to send them to their deaths.

**Link Spellwork** is also thoroughly exhausted, I think I may have actually strained the spell too far. It pulls in the supply of that empty liquid far slower than it was when I started. But its job is done for now.

There is only one thing left to do.

Well, no. There are several things left to do. But only time and convenience for one. To let my honeybee force rest, before they go to help me spring an ambush.

And then, to fight. And win. And press that advantage backward three thousand lengths to the lair of my enemy. And *shatter them*.