

Unnamed - Apparatus Of Change

Available Power : 2

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)

Form Wall (2, Shape)

Tenacity : 2

Nudge Material (1, Shape)

Bolster Nourishment (2, Civic)

As I become more comfortable with my new senses, both those I find through my magic, and those that I find within my changed body, one feeling settles in that I cannot shake.

I am meant to see the world.

There are certain senses that I do not miss as much as I thought I would. I do miss them all, this is not an attempt to lie to myself. But I find myself missing the flavor of food less than I would have expected. I *remember* some truly grand meals, especially from the lives of the merchant and the singer. When I was a farmer, I ate well, rarely went hungry, but I did not have access to spices or even regularly a supply of salt. When I was a soldier, I think I would have eaten bark chips if they were set still in front of me for long enough. Some of my lives had no taste.

And yes, I miss the smell of the evening breeze, and the touch of a lover, and the sound of thunder. I experience none of these things as I am now, and I never will if I do not find the magics to let me. I can pull substitute sensations from my bound honeybees, and any other insects I choose to tether to myself. And it *is* like feeling those things. But limited and stifled, *small* in a way that leaves much to be desired.

But what I truly miss is my eyes. I want to see the sunrise, and explore the woods around me with more than just a map of material resources and a rough idea of where the fire is, and stand watch at night, and cast my eyes upward to catch glimpses of hawks and songbirds. Every problem I have would be eased tenfold if only I could see.

Every time I have gotten close to the threshold of making the choice, something has pushed my crystal hand in a different direction. But now, with no pressing need and a growing desire to take the risk, I set my next course. I *will* be selecting **Distant Vision** when next I elevate my **Authority**. All it will take is five points of power. And while during my sleep I only gained a single one, I do not think it is overly optimistic to assume I will have what I yearn for within the week.

But I will hold back for now, and only spend them when I am sure I will have enough. No sense in limiting my options at this crossroads. Not when patience is of such value to me.

The day begins. I do not wake when the humans do, my new body is not nearly so convenient as to let me guess the time by having me rise with the sun. Perhaps, if I were not buried under a length of dirt, I would be able to do that. But I still remain worried about being damaged or killed, even if only by accident. I would not say that I *trust* the humans around me yet, but I feel a connection to them, and I would tell them where I was in a moment if I thought it would help either of us. For now, though, I keep my privacy. I will experiment with being in the sun later; I think I will have all the time I will need to learn about myself.

Everyone else is already awake when I am roused by my spells restoration. What I had thought of as a convenient rest turning out to be disruptive to my attempts to form a routine with the survivors.

A daily routine, ah, I did not realize I could miss something I had never had. But my memories hold so many slices of familiar actions. Wake with the dawn, feed the animals, patrol the perimeter, be dressed by a servant, speak with the head scholar. Flashes of old lives that I smile at with the fond familiarity of someone who does *not* have to rise with the dawn any longer.

But the stability, the comfort, is missed. And I try to recapture that. I fetch water for the camp, softly tend the fire, stir the stew in the cook pot. My bees show me small windows into the life of people who are starting to believe they can stay here; if not safely, then at least longer than anywhere they had stopped on their long run.

They are doing all manner of small tasks to start to make life slightly more comfortable. Digging a latrine, marking out the bounds of their camp, arranging a sleeping area, and one of the adults has lashed together a rough looking stick roof that is held over where their dwindling supply packs sit, sheltered by the branches of a nearby tree and the new construction from the sun and any rain that may come.

I haven't seen rain yet. Maybe it's the dry season. Maybe this place doesn't rain. I can't imagine that. All my memories of woods like this are of thick, damp air; lush green that thrived off the regular rainfall, and blooming riots of color from the flowers and vines that grew everywhere.

I know there are flowers here. My bees love them. But the grassy wildflowers and the thick blossoms on nearby bushes lack the striking colors I am used to. Or was used to. It is sometimes more a challenge than I expected to separate myself from who I was. But who I was loved their rainy forest, and I don't think I have a problem with sharing that with my past life.

I find the armored woman with a bee, less armored now and more just wearing her patch of surviving leather plate over a thin strip of cloth for modesty, coming back from outside my range and carrying an armful of thick red fruits. I know they are fruits because **Know Material** tells me they are, but I've never seen anything like them before and so I am at a loss to if they are even safe to eat. But she is already halfway through one of them, so perhaps she knows something I do not.

I follow her with the bee, waiting patiently until she deposits her bounty, and then I act.

Nudge Material has gotten slightly stronger, with my improvement to my **Tenacity**. And I use it now, aiming through the eyes of my bee, and beginning to draw.

I do not, it turns out, have a steady hand. **Nudge Material** is precise, in that it does what I tell the spell to do, but while the detail of my control has improved, the spell itself demands focus and mental commands to action that are quite challenging when I am attempting something specific and not simply pushing dirt around. Still, I manage.

"Hello." I write in the dirt next to where she sits. I want to say so much, but my spell's liquid reserve is limited, and so, I try to be as direct as possible, even when what I *want* is a meandering conversation simply to have some form of emotional contact. "I cannot hear you, but I can read through the bee." For emphasis, I land the bee I have watching, perching upon the peak of the furrows in the dirt that form my letters, before taking off again.

She notices. And while my bees do not have the cleanest of detail vision, I can still find amusement in the slow blink she does as she looks at what I have written. Then she turns, and a vibration in the air through my bees makes me think she is calling out to someone. It doesn't take long for me to confirm that, as another of the adult humans comes running to her. I track his movements in **See Domain**, learning bit by bit how the spell tells me location in its arcane manner.

The woman points at the letters in the dirt. The newcomer stares as well, kneeling down to poke at what I've written. He asks a question, she offers a shrug and a reply. Taps one word, then a few others.

The man looks around, finds a stick to grab. I **Shift Wood** as he holds it, smoothing away the splinters, and he looks down at his tool with a bemused look on his face. Then he draws a line under my words, and starts to write a reply.

His handwriting is horrible, much like the woman's, and it takes him a while of writing and erasing while consulting his companion to finally settle on what he wants to say. It occurs to me as I watch, slowly seeing my **Bind Insect** reservoir draining away, that the two of them are perhaps the most literate people here, and they are not exactly up to the standards of one of the mirror archives.

"Who are you?" They have asked. "Why are you helping us?" And then, after being poked by the woman a few times, a third line is added of "She wants another knife." The man looks very apologetic, though trying to make eye contact with a bee is obviously an alien experience for him.

I can empathize. But not overly much. I smooth out the ground around them, getting a twitch from the man and a curious gaze from the woman, and I start to write back. "I don't have a name yet." I tell them. "I am helping you because I want to. Ability supplies its own uses, and I do not like seeing people hurting."

They begin to read, slowly puzzling through the words, and I realize that I wrote the final part in lobi wordline again, the ancient language that is foundational to one set of my memories seeping into my magical touch as I lost myself focusing on simply putting the words into the dirt.

Oh, and she asked for a blade. I actually can do that. I momentarily borrow the wings of one of my bees that I have tethered but not taken control of, and send it toward the bodies of the monsters. I overlap how I am seeing, through insect eyes and through **Know Material**, and I aim **Make Low Blade** through the spot where this particular patch of bone is sitting.

I had done this before, nights ago, under pressure. But now, I try to let myself feel the process as the magic takes hold. I watch through my bee as, in an unpleasant ripping motion, the charred skin and fur of one of the monsters bulges and tears open, a length of bone peeling back before snapping off with a vibration in the air that even my small bee can feel.

The bone length shudders and flows like melting wax, a few small slivers moving to join it from around the creature's body. And quickly, over the course of a few minutes, it goes from a bone, to a sharpened bone, to a recognizable single edged knife. Not a fighter's dagger, but then, I did not ask for a dagger. I sense that I could have, but I had not given it thought. As a finishing touch, a length of hide is stripped bare, and coiled around the hilt, before melding into place as a single piece of work.

I am forced to assume it smells horrible. But it is done. I will guide the human to it later.

I do not actually need to refocus to my other bee. Splitting my attention is as easy as breathing used to be; simple, and effortless, until I focus upon it. I look down and see the reply the humans have written.

“What do you want?”

It is a hard question to answer simply. I remind myself that I need to use the simplest words I can, and not too many of them. My spell begins to run dry, and my audience can only read so clearly. But I have so much to say, so much to tell them. I have so *many* things I want. I want to grow, and explore, and *live* in this new life that I have. But that is not truly what they are asking about, is it?

They want to know what I want to do with them. Because a few days of help are not enough to trust. Not for people who have been running and starving. Something has hurt them, and small kindness will not be the tipping point that undoes that harm. They want to know if I am going to hurt them in kind.

I will not. But they need to know.

“We voted.” I say, wording it as ‘chose together’ and hoping the meaning comes across in their limited dialect. “You accepted me. I want us to thrive.”

Nudge Material is almost empty. I pull back, and watch lightly as they look at what I have written. I don’t know how much nuance comes across, when I am writing to people who may miss any number of the words I have left them. But then, I see the woman tap the man on the leg, and lean forward to scratch a circle around one word I have put down.

“Us.”

Yes. Exactly. Thank you for noticing. Us. Not you, not me. In every language I know, it’s a small word, and yet it bears the foundation for every community ever made. The word performs a foundational amount of work, and my use of it was not an accident.

I want *us* to grow. All of us. Even the bees. Especially the bees. I made them a **Promise**, after all.

They start to reply, but more conversation would not be helpful now with my ability to reply dwindling. I make a show of moving my bees in a loop before breaking them away, and hope they understand the signal that I cannot keep going.

I feel strangely satisfied. I have done something I was afraid to, even if in only a small way. A gap is bridged, and bit by bit, I will build upon that start. I will get to know these people, more than simply watching them as machinery that adds and removes materials from my immediate area.

I have more work to do today, before I rest again. But before I begin to continue testing **Form Wall** or **Bolster Nourishment**, I take some time to simply think to myself. I let my bees go their way, watching the small bits of empty nothingness refill the spell a drop at a time, and I relax.

Then, I begin to organize my thoughts on language.

I have not lived a single life where I have failed to be, at some point, a teacher of tools. And while the adults may need to spend their days foraging for food and setting up their shelters, the camp contains a number of children who need something to occupy their time. The memories of a scholar do not exactly speak to me; that is not how this joining of souls works. Those old lives are not *still* alive; they are more like vibrant records than active spirits.

But the scholar I once was would be very pleased that I am mapping out a lesson plan for wayward youths. A cycle started before I was born, now, may finally be complete.

And if I teach them well enough, I will have conversation partners with far better handwriting to speak to.