

**Unnamed - Apparatus Of Change**

**Available Power : 12**

**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 : 6**

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

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

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

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

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

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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 : 5**

***Know Material (1, Perceive)***

***Form Wall (2, Shape)***

***Link Spellwork (3, Arcane)***

***Sever Command (4, War)***

***Collect Material (1, Shape)***

**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)***

“You need to *tell us* when you theurgurate things!” Seraha stomps around the office, one arm moving in a loop over her head to punctuate the sentence. It’s not the first thing she’s said; she’s been chastising me for my lack of communication for several breaths now. Jahn escaped early, leaving just some fairly confused bees who are uncertain as to *why* Seraha is mad, and don’t know how to make her feel better.

*Theurgurate?* I ask.

“You claim you were a scholar! I’m sure you’ve fabricated words to suit your needs before!” She points a weathered finger at my central wooden pane.

*This isn’t about the classroom, is it?* I write as she continues to talk about how I failed to inform her that I was toying with things none of us understand.

It takes her a moment to see the new words, but she stops when she reads them. Her eyes search the room for something to look at, something that’s *me*, and she settles on the beetle perched on the desk and patiently listening, occasionally shifting its legs to follow her as she moves back and forth across the space that I still haven’t fully repaired.

“You left us.” She says. And I start to think that this woman, who has no patience for anyone wasting her time, might have been drawing things out for *my* comfort. Now, though, she cuts to what she is trying to say. “You left. For days, we didn’t know what was happening. Kalip simply told us you were trying to protect us. We knew not if you would be back, if you had even really *left* or if you were simply ignoring us, if the magic that keeps us alive would stop working, if if if! And you didn’t say a single thing to reassure or calm! Didn’t even ask for *help!*” She stops and breathes, eyes pressed shut; when she speaks next she intentionally quiets her voice so the shrill yells do not carry down the fort’s halls. “You came back, but you also left. And yet, I am familiar with grief. I cannot truly be upset with you. So, instead of saying that, I instead remember that you have tampered with my classroom.”

I don’t respond right away. I try to offer her a seat, but despite reminiscent of several grandmothers I have had, in terms of age, Seraha keeps her feet. I try not to think about how the destruction of her home would have quickly filtered out anyone who couldn’t.

She’s not wrong. I did leave. I didn’t think about how it would bother anyone, or worry anyone. I can very easily say that I was caught in my own emotions and that I acted impulsively because of that, but that’s not really any *better*. I remember being a farmer, talking to a son when the boy was still alive, telling him that reasons aren’t excuses. I don’t know where the wisdom came from; perhaps the farmer’s own parent, a line of wisdom stretching back to the first person to realize that they should hold themselves to be better.

*I am sorry. I write. Part of me wants to write in an ancient language that feels like it has better words, better symbolism for its apologies. But that would defeat the purpose. I didn't think. And I am sorry.*

Seraha stops and reads the words, leaning forward and squinting slightly to do so. Her eyes may not be sharp, but the nod she gives is. "Good." She says simply. "Do not fail this way again." *Then* she accepts a seat, and settles in near my somewhat damaged desk. "Now, tell me what you have done to my classroom."

*Built small working tables for the children?* I venture.

"No. Well, yes. Thank you. But perhaps make another attempt at an answer." Seraha seems unamused. I haven't spoken to Seraha personally much, but I am finding that I have a difficult time with this woman who keeps her humor buried deep under the surface. "Something that explains the *magic* you have done."

Partially uncertain, I check on something within myself and my spellwork. And yes, there is something, right where I left it. Back when I had what felt like all the time in the world to experiment with **Link Spellwork**, and still had not yet come to a conclusion as to what it allowed me to do, I made one particular attempt that was strange even for me. Combining **Claim Construction** and **Congea! Mantra**.

**Claim Construction** I have long since finished working on the fort structures and walls; the spell sits mostly unused, but steadily producing for me small notes that will one day crystalize into points of power, as the building itself is used. **Congea! Mantra** I continue to use to enhance bees, and to produce more of the small stones with unstable writing on them; though I now know that they seem to learn alongside their bearers, and turn that learning into enhanced versions of the tasks they are set to.

And once, I used **Link Spellwork** to replicate the way that I feed mantra into my bees, but on a *room*. While my honeybees have developed mantra for flying, or stinging, or dancing, I wonder then what a *classroom* would make of one.

I explain the situation to Seraha. *As a test, I imbued the room with one of the mantra, and then promptly forgot as the latest crisis that our lives seem to have become arose.* She has been busy, and we have never spoken of mantra. I quickly fill her in. *They learn, as you do. And then they create... I think 'echos' is perhaps the best term. They make magic a reflection of what was done. And judging by how the bees grow, the more it is done, and the better, the deeper the magic of the mantra becomes. I believe they are limited by their size, and how much strength I put into their creation, but they do seem to grow quite strong.*

"And so you naturally put a stone from the shore of the Timeless Realm that learns in my classroom, because you thought that it was a place of learning, and the two should meet?" She challenges me.

*Ah. No. Admitting guilt stings, but in a way I almost find amusing this time. I... simply thought that it was the room most consistently used.*

The pink furred demoness stares at my writing board as if she is trying to decide the best way to cook and serve me with the evening meal. When she brings a hand up to press against where her horns and skull meet, I actually worry slightly that she is experiencing pain, but soon enough she sighs and gently pushes away the bees that are trying to check on her. "It may interest you to know, then." She says in a strained voice. "Each day, there comes a moment where I feel the magic become... available. It is both patient and obedient, and when asked, it will... yes, 'echo' is a good term, I agree. It echos, and takes one thing that has been taught in the classroom that day. And it makes that learning true for all the students."

*That is... terrifying. I write without considering my thoughts. Something that can infiltrate minds, without consent? I will find a way to break it as soon as I can. Or perhaps... perhaps being taught and listening is a form of consent. Though I would worry at anything that can change the mind of... you are not concerned about this.* I shift what I am writing as I see Seraha shaking her head.

"This is the most useful tool a teacher could be offered. Are you *mad*? *Break it*? The mere presence of a gob student allows me to teach a higher concept of language, and then pass that on to the children! They are learning as demons twice their age, and humans even older!"

*Now wait one moment...*

Seraha ignores my concerned protest. "If we had proper teaching tools, a library, or even a few reference books or good tutors, this one room could raise natural philosophers of truly astounding brilliance." She folds her excitement away in a sudden shift. "And yet, you still made this change without asking, or even informing."

*I did apologize for that, yes. I write. Did you imply that human children are less clever than demon kids?*

"...I would never do that." Seraha says, suspiciously defensive.

*Good. I wish I could fold my arms at someone. I let that subject drop for now though. I will see what I can do about reference material, though. And... do you think this would be a good treatment to give to other rooms? Would this magic be useful in the kitchen, or perhaps the bedrooms we have repurposed?*

"Yes. Indeed. And if you make a list of the order you will be acting on this plan in, I would happily inform the others so no one is caught off guard." Seraha offers. "Perhaps wait on the bedrooms until the others are returned."

*I wonder what counts as a room practicing something.* The idle thought adds itself to the board, and I give a small internal smile as I realize that using **Shift Wood** to write has become something at this level of power where it is an idle thought. *The armory, say. Would it become a better armory, just holding the powder?*

Seraha strokes the fur of her chin. "It might keep it dry. Or maintain the armor, keep the chain... oiled? Is that something that is...? I am not a militarist. I am a historian." She huffs, mistaking my silence perhaps for judgment. "Regardless, it would harm nothing to test."

*Oh, don't say that. It could very easily cause something to explode.*

"I beg your pardon?"

*The powder. It could explode, if something goes wrong. We do have enough to demolish a wing of the fort, after all.*

The look of alarm on her face is almost like a physical slap. "And we kept it?!" She demands.

*I... we... yes? How else would we make the guns work? We have gotten worryingly lucky so far, eventually we will need to use one of the fort's overguns. I would prefer our powder be intact and prepared for that moment.* I realize suddenly what she is worried about. *Did you not know how the gunpowder worked?*

"I had thought it was magic, much like the vim, or your own... everything." She curls a hand in the air, and a bee playfully tries to land on it. I privately shoo it away, reminding them that Seraha is less durable than most of our residents. "Not *destructive* like that. How will I sleep knowing that is below us?"

*The same way you have been? If it helps, you can know that I am keeping an eye on it.* This is not strictly speaking true, but I do think I could stop a runaway fire from killing us all if I needed to. *An explosion is the worst case. It is similar to saying 'you could die going on a walk', because there is always the possibility that you trip and impale yourself on your own walking staff.*

"Hrm." She sniffs, and looks largely unconvinced. She also makes no move to leave the office.

*Is there something else I can help with? I had planned to make use of my magic around the fort today, before I speak with Kalip.*

"About changing him, yes?" Seraha asks. She sounds unhappy, in a wholly new way.

*Correct. We will be taking more time than with Yuea, and working to decide what will best suit him, if I can make it possible.* I don't know if I can, really, but I am willing to give it a try. *In the meantime, as I believe he is distracted trying to explain to an eight summer old kid why she*

*cannot physically use his bow, and Zhoy is ignoring him, I have some time to use my magic to support the fort itself. I am considering setting **Stone Pylons** around the fort to constantly **Imbue Mending** upon the area. Though I am sure-*

“I suspect that would frustrate you when it did not work.” The elderly demoness cracks a smile at me.

*-that it will have complications, yes.*

I partly expect her to offer to help, but instead, Seraha just looks... tired. “Well.” She says, after a quiet pause. Though I realize suddenly that the whole room is quiet, her voice is the only one there. No matter how much work it takes me to write, I am never another speaker in the room. “I will speak with you later, I suppose. Thank you for your time.” It sounds so official. So distant.

I want to tell her to wait, that we should speak more, that I want her to feel at home here, that I want her to be comfortable. But I don't. I let her go, hooves clapping on the wood hall of the second floor. Nothing has changed. Not really. But Seraha, for all that she trusts me to be there for them, trusts me to be reliable, I don't think she trusts me to *care*.

And nothing I do here and now will convince her, I don't think. In another room, where a younger demoness sits next to me, I write a quick question to Muelly asking if she thinks Seraha hates me. “No,” she says sadly, “I think she's just old and angry.”

*I don't like that answer.* I reply.

“No one does.” Muelly shrugs at the beetle resting on the table in front of her. “Can you make her younger? She'll still be angry.”

*I'll see what I can do.* I reply.

I don't know if I'm serious or not. I suppose we shall see.