

Duncan's Great Success

Story By: Andrew Frinkle

Duncan was getting ready to make another wand. His master, Meerfus, was letting him try more and more often these days. Duncan had been working with the famous, wand-making, magician for more than three years now, and he was getting to an age where he needed to be able to make some of his own wands. It was part of the learning process.

Sadly, Duncan didn't always succeed when he tried to make wands. Meerfus claimed it was all in his intent. That is, what was he thinking when he was trying to make the wand? Apparently, he had to focus completely on the goal at hand, and could not allow himself distractions. Distractions made for poor wands, and he was still not able to focus all of his thoughts on the task of making wands. He always had things he was wondering about or things that diverted his attention.

For example, when he was making a wand that was supposed to shoo bugs out of a house, he was also thinking about the dairy man who was delivering milk down the road at that moment. So, instead of just shooing away bugs, the wand switched bugs with little puddles of milk. This was a pretty silly result for a wand to have, and one that smelled after a few days.

Another time, Duncan's wand to sweep the floors ended up making dust clouds that spun like mini tornadoes. The dust devils raged around the house, all because he'd been staring out the window at a swirl of leaves that had been caught up in winds against the house. He realized he really needed to focus, or Meerfus was bound to get upset. The mini tornadoes had really messed up Meerfus' scrolls and papers, and it had taken nearly a week to sort them back out.

Meerfus decided that Duncan needed to work without distraction, so they'd built a curtain that surrounded his whole work table until he figured out how to ignore things around him. The white sheet hung on all four sides of him as he worked now. Meerfus always said it was not the materials that Duncan chose that caused problems, because Duncan chose those well. So, if it was entirely the fault of his focus, he really had no excuses now, did he?

Duncan looked at the materials on his worktable. He was making a fire-starting wand. The ingredients for this particular wand were warm coals, a long splinter of dried pine, bits of tinder, and flecks of flint and steel for creating sparks. Duncan wore gloves and handled the coals with care, because they were hot enough to burn. He laid out the ingredients carefully, cleared his mind, and spoke the words that came to mind, words that helped focus his natural magic into the wand he was making: "*Fireus Startus Easicus.*"

The wand picked up a glowing red aspect, as if he'd just blown on the coals to heat them up. The length of the wand glittered dangerously with flint and steel chips. It seemed as if he'd succeeded, so he took the gloves off and went out to his waiting master with his new wand in hand.

Meerfus grinned and nodded toward the fireplace, where a few logs sat ready to be lit. All other flammable materials had been moved back from the fireplace at least three or four steps. Duncan shook his wrist and pointed the wand at the fireplace. There was no huge explosion, there was no blast of smoke and ash, and there were no strange side effects; just a simple, warm fire started around the logs, burning cheerfully.

"Excellent work, Duncan!" Meerfus clapped happily. "You shall have to sell that wand and keep the money for it – minus the cost of materials, which was next to nothing."

Duncan grinned sheepishly. He didn't know what to say, but it seemed sad to sell the wand. "Can I keep it? It is my first successful wand, after all."

Meerfus nodded. "That is fine, perhaps better than selling it. Make another tomorrow and sell that one instead."



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Use the information in the story to answer the questions below.

1. Why is today's wand-making special?
 - A. Usually Meerfus makes them.
 - B. It's Duncan's birthday.
 - C. Meerfus is sick, and Duncan has to cover for him.
 - D. It is Duncan's first time making a wand.

2. What kind of wands does the story NOT mention?
 - A. fire starting
 - B. bug shooing
 - C. dust sweeping
 - D. dinner cooking

3. What was wrong with the bug shooing wand Duncan made?
 - A. It replaced the bugs with worms.
 - B. It made the bugs smell bad.
 - C. It replaced the bugs with milk puddles.
 - D. It did nothing.

4. What was wrong with the dust sweeping wand Duncan made?
 - A. It made mini tornadoes of dust.
 - B. It made dust clouds.
 - C. It didn't do anything.
 - D. It put all the dust in the blankets.

5. Why doesn't Duncan want to sell the fire starting wand he makes?
 - A. It won't be worth much
 - B. He is too shy to try to sell it.
 - C. He is afraid it will be used for evil.
 - D. He wants to keep his first successful wand.

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