

## Making Other Magic

Duncan, the wand-maker's apprentice, frowned at the growing stack of magical wands in the corner of the shop. They were neatly arranged by use and marked as well, not that they would forget the use of one, having made them all so painstakingly. Sales had been slow, as they tended to get sometimes. Then, without warning, they were sure to pick up. One thing he had learned was that Meerfus the Magician didn't sit around waiting for orders. To hone his skills, he liked to keep making wands, even if he didn't have any contracts to make them.

"Why do we make just wands?" Duncan asked. It was a question that had bothered him for some time.

"What else would we make? Magical swords and flying carpets?" Meerfus smiled.

Duncan grinned at the silly suggestions. "Well, not that, really, since we don't have the metalworking skills, I don't think. I've never seen you pound a piece of steel or work a forge. I've not seen you play around with a loom to weave carpets, either. Surely we could do something else, though..."

"Magic rings and necklaces?" Meerfus suggested with a smirk. "Love potions?"

"No, not those either, but I get your point, but there must be something we could do that is like wands..." Duncan thought for a moment. "Walking sticks?"

Meerfus nodded thoughtfully, pulling at his well-groomed mustache and beard. "Staves or walking sticks are fine things. They work differently than wands, though. Wands, you see, are small and imbued with a specific energy for a specific purpose. A wand only releases its energy every so often, and only when you make it do so. A staff is something entirely different."

Duncan's eyes widened. He was all ears and completely interested. Wands were interesting and all, but he longed to make magic items of all sorts, to expand his abilities. "How are they different?"

"Take for an example a shepherd. He watches his flock, guards them from predators, and keeps them safe. He does this for years, his hands always on his shepherd's crook, a long hooked staff. He works his natural magic into the wood over time, if he has any of the gift at all, and eventually, the flock will heed him better, the wolves will stay away, and the paths will bend to his feet – it is the power of his magic. His skills increase with use of the staff."





“So anyone could make a staff?”

“No, only if they have the gift, even a little of it. It takes a long time to make one, and the activities you do when using the staff alter its properties. Unlike a wand, the magic is always present, gathering around the staff’s owner as they carry it. Like a cloud or a beam of light, it surrounds the owner. Some are very powerful.”

“I sure would like to see one of those.” Duncan sighed.

Meerfus grinned and went to a locked back closet, one he never went into. Inside a long silken bag was a gnarled staff of knotted wood, whorled and twisted with strange patterns. While it looked grey and old when it first came out of the bag, on contact with the sunlight that came through the window, it immediately began to green. Leaves began to sprout from the top of it, where the twists and curls were heaviest.

“That’s amazing!”

“Not really. It’s quite a nuisance.” He pointed at the floor, where even the floorboards were starting to grow like fresh saplings. He covered the staff once more and locked it in the dark closet. “The problem with magic is that even the best intents can be twisted, Duncan.”

“So a staff that causes things to grow is bad? I don’t see how. I guess it could be bad for your house to start growing leaves and branches, but it’s not that bad.”

“Consider using this staff in the winter. Trees are resting and dormant. When you walk by with this staff, they spring to life, setting out buds and trying to go to leaf. Well, I once took a nap beneath a tree in the winter and work to find it flowering and growing apples.”

“That is amazing! Apples in the winter!” Duncan clapped his hands excitedly.

“It was amazing, until I moved on and the tree died. I thought the leaves and apples would wither and it would be fine, but I stole the energy it was saving for spring. Come spring, there was nothing left in it to send out new buds. The natural order of things was twisted.”

“I see.” Duncan looked troubled. “Still, I wouldn’t mind making a staff of my own.”

Meerfus nodded. “Of course you want to, and you may. However, take care with what you do as you use it and how you think. If not, you may very well have to lock it up on the closet, as I have had to with mine. To me, wands are safer and far more useful.”

“What about a staff that heals things that are nearby?” Duncan thought aloud.

“That is wonderful thinking, but unless you are often doctoring people, plants, or animals, I don’t see how the power would get into the staff. Take some time to think. Sometimes, you come across a length of wood that is just the right length and shape, and you get inspired. It will let you know when you are ready.”

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

1. What is Duncan concerned about?
  - A. Making something other than wands for once
  - B. Doing too much work
  - C. The shop is not making money
  - D. He doesn't have any worries or concerns.
  
2. Which of these does Meerfus not jokingly suggest they make?
  - A. flying carpets
  - B. magic rings
  - C. love potions
  - D. suits of armor
  
3. What kind of person does Meerfus use as an example of staff making?
  - A. a fisherman
  - B. a shepherd
  - C. a cook
  - D. a soldier
  
4. What does Meerfus' staff that he keeps locked in the closet do?
  - A. it makes people fall asleep
  - B. it makes food taste better
  - C. it helps people swim
  - D. it makes things grow
  
5. What reason does Meerfus give to take caution when making a magic staff?
  - A. Even good intentions can have unexpected bad side-effects.
  - B. Magic is dangerous.
  - C. People are irresponsible.
  - D. Duncan is not ready to make one.

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