

# Meerfus Vs. Duncan

Story By: Andrew Frinkle

Meerfus decided it was time to test Duncan's skills in wand-making. He had been a good apprentice, one who was very good at fetching and listening, and it was time for him to actually put his talents to full use. He left a letter of instructions, the challenge really, on Duncan's work table. It was the first thing the boy saw after he got up and washed his face. Duncan looked over at his master, eyes wide, and grinned. Then it was off to the races.

Both of them set to making a wand that could make plants grow faster. Meerfus had never made one quite like this before, so he wanted to challenge himself. Truthfully, he wondered how hard it would be to do it alone, as he'd quite gotten used to having his assistant do lots of his work for him. He didn't have the youth's obvious energy, either. Duncan had already run off toward town without even eating breakfast.

Meerfus thought before starting, something Duncan might have better considered. He decided that new growth would require fresh bamboo for the wand. Bamboo grew quickly and a fresh piece of bamboo might grow a foot in a day! Then, he'd add some sprouts from the garden, and maybe some fresh rainwater from the trough out back. All of that seemed to indicate fresh and fast growth for him.

Locating bamboo was far from easy, but he had a friend that grew exotic plants. Sadly, it was quite a walk. Duncan, meanwhile, was running errands around town, collecting his own ingredients. Meerfus thought he saw the boy running down the gravel crossroad on his way to collect the bamboo, but it was hard to tell when someone was moving that fast!

Once Meerfus had collected his bamboo, not cheaply either, he walked back home and collected the other ingredients. He waited for Duncan then, but didn't have long to wait. The boy returned with a curious bag made of burlap, full of secret ingredients. Meerfus shook his head, set up at his own worktable, and started assembling his wand. "*Growus Giganticus Fasticus!*" He called out, the room filling with power as he connected the ingredients into a magic wand. It pulsed green with life.

At the next table, Duncan was readying his own wand. He wrapped the coiled creepers from fast-growing vines around the stalk of a new shoot of corn, which he was using instead of wood. Then, he sprinkled warm dirt and water near the roots. Finally, he held up a hand lens



near the window to focus light from the sun onto the head of the growing corn. "*Makus Super-sizus Planticuses!*" The words came out in a bit of an awkward struggle, but Duncan had magic in him, and the wand was made!

Meerfus shook his head in amazement. Some of the boy's ideas were almost better than his own! He had great instincts, but the true test was in the wrist. They both went outside, not without a little worry. Meerfus certainly didn't want to lose to his student, and Duncan had a lot to prove.

Meerfus tried first on a patch of their garden with tomatoes. He shook his bamboo wand at it, and watched the plants grow from knee high to the height of his shoulder. Fat red tomatoes plumped on the vines, heavy enough that they pulled the tomato plants back toward the ground, just shy of breaking.

"Wow!" Duncan said, shaking his head and looking at his own wand. Suddenly, he was not so certain.

"Try it. I want to see what you and it are capable of." Meerfus encouraged him. He was curious, too.

Duncan shook his wand at some sunflowers. Suddenly, one of them grew, its stalk growing from the thickness of his wrist to the width of his leg! The head of the sunflower grew so fat that it split open with ripe seeds. It continued to try to grow, splitting and cracking until even the stalk had splintered. The plant was dead.

Meerfus smiled. "Good try, excellent in fact."

"I killed it..." Duncan sighed.

"When you make a wand, you must consider the entire effect of the wand. If you think only to make something grow big, it can get *too* big. If you wish for it to grow big, within limits, and to stay healthy, it will do better. Your wand was amazing though. You have much to learn, but you have come SO far. I am proud of you." Meerfus declared.

Duncan beamed. "Thank you."

Meerfus' eyebrows waggled mischievously. "Now, let's try that wand on a pumpkin. I want to see how big it can get!" He cackled.

In the end, they made a pumpkin so big that, even though it cracked, they took to town on a wagon and it made over 30 pumpkin pies!



# Meerfus Vs. Duncan

Story By: Andrew Frinkle

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

1. What does Meerfus challenge Duncan to do?
  - A. clean the chimney
  - B. weed the garden
  - C. make a spell
  - D. make a magic wand
2. How does Duncan feel about this challenge at first?
  - A. He is excited.
  - B. He is scared.
  - C. He is bored with it before it starts.
  - D. He is worried.
3. What does Meerfus realize when he's making his wand?
  - A. It's lonely being alone.
  - B. It's nice to have someone helping you.
  - C. Duncan is a waste of space.
  - D. Duncan isn't learning anything.
4. What forms the major part of Duncan's wand?
  - A. bamboo
  - B. a piece of a huge tree
  - C. a branch of a big fruit tree
  - D. a corn shoot
5. How does Meerfus feel about Duncan's efforts in the challenge?
  - A. He is not impressed.
  - B. He's proud of his assistant.
  - C. He wants to fire Duncan.
  - D. He is a bit sad that Duncan beat him.

# Meerfus Vs. Duncan

Story By: Andrew Frinkle

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

1. What does Meerfus challenge Duncan to do?
  - A. clean the chimney
  - B. weed the garden
  - C. make a spell
  - D. make a magic wand**
2. How does Duncan feel about this challenge at first?
  - A. He is excited.**
  - B. He is scared.
  - C. He is bored with it before it starts.
  - D. He is worried.
3. What does Meerfus realize when he's making his wand?
  - A. It's lonely being alone.
  - B. It's nice to have someone helping you.**
  - C. Duncan is a waste of space.
  - D. Duncan isn't learning anything.
4. What forms the major part of Duncan's wand?
  - A. bamboo
  - B. a piece of a huge tree
  - C. a branch of a big fruit tree
  - D. a corn shoot**
5. How does Meerfus feel about Duncan's efforts in the challenge?
  - A. He is not impressed.
  - B. He's proud of his assistant.**
  - C. He wants to fire Duncan.
  - D. He is a bit sad that Duncan beat him.