

Meerfus the Magician Returns

Story By: Andrew Frinkle

Meerfus the Wand-Making Magician had a new commission. He had to make a new wand that could make fireworks for celebrations. This was going to be an interesting and exciting piece of work, and even his apprentice, the indubitable Duncan, was excited to help gather the required materials.

After some consideration, Meerfus decided that he would need the following things to make the wand: lightning bugs, black powder, crushed gemstones, and a stick from a black walnut tree. Most of these were not too hard to obtain, but the crushed gemstones would be expensive. Thankfully, his rich client could pay for the materials.

First, he set Duncan to collecting fireflies or lightning bugs. He gave the boy a net and a small mesh cage to keep them in. The boy ran himself dizzy, darting to and fro, gathering the dozens of bugs required for the magic. It was a fine summer evening, and it was a fun way to pass the time.

The next day they went to find black powder. There was a mine the next town over, so they went there. Demolitions were used to clear parts of the mountain to get the gold out more easily, so it really just took some talking and a bit of coin to convince the foreman to part with a sack full of black powder.

The crushed gemstones came from a jeweler's market in the next county. It was a long ride and a pricy thing, all made up of green emerald dust, red ruby dust, and blue sapphire dust. There was a bit of garnet, tourmaline, and amethyst in there, too, adding the blood red, greenish-yellows, and purples that would really round out the fireworks.

Finally, the black walnut branch came from a grove that Meerfus himself was growing. He had learned long ago that he would save much time if he had his own grove of trees. He had many different trees growing, all in different sizes, shapes, and ages. He never knew when he might need a branch or a twig from one of them, so it paid to keep gathering seeds and saplings to grow his collection.

With all the ingredients assembled, it was time for the magic! He squeezed the glowing but guts out, stirred it into the mortar full of gemstone dust, and carefully added spoonfuls of black powder. He mixed it around and then stuck the black walnut twig he'd cut into the mix. He shaped the goopy mixture into a ball and said the magic words: *Explodicus Beautificus Skywardimus*.

Meerfus didn't get excited often, but testing out that new wand was something he certainly enjoyed. The magic had caused the wand to harden into a sparkly, glittering orb atop the polished black walnut stick. Flicks of the wrist sent bursts of flowering light into the night sky, snapping, sizzling, and popping in a rainbow of colors.

Magic was fun. He loved his job, and his apprentice Duncan loved the fireworks. Meerfus knew that this wand was bound to make one happy customer!



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

1. Which of the following is not an ingredient required for the wand-making process?
 - A. crushed gemstones
 - B. black powder
 - C. a steel rod
 - D. lightning bugs

2. Which ingredient do the gather first?
 - A. crushed gemstones
 - B. black powder
 - C. black walnut stick
 - D. lightning bugs

3. Which ingredient do the gather last?
 - A. crushed gemstones
 - B. black powder
 - C. black walnut stick
 - D. lightning bugs

4. By growing his own trees for use in his wand-making, how would you describe Meerfus?
 - A. showing foresight and planning
 - B. thoughtful and careful
 - C. unorganized and haphazard
 - D. careless, but lucky

5. Meerfus seems successful at his job because of all of the following except which one?
 - A. He likes what he does.
 - B. He has a good assistant.
 - C. He works quickly and carelessly.
 - D. He seems knowledgeable in his field.

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