

The Ann20



The Bard's Corner

(A minstrel's musings)

Arcane Forces

(A haiku by Whiz R. Duh)

Villains collapse now

Killed by Thunder and Lightning

Shot from grimy palms

The Hunt

(A haiku by Pap I. Russ)

Wolves pounding at heels

Jaws, snapping, reach for flesh

The Hunt has begun

Cave of Hidden Dangers

(A haiku by Hiya Koo)

Stale water dripping

Falling to the dreary floor

Awaking, a Gryc

The Wizard's Frustration

(A haiku by Madge Ack)

Ice bursts from my hand

Striking my enemy's chest

He shrugs and charges

An Uneventful Journey

(A haiku by Seymour Stuff)

Butterflies flutter

Horses trot, I sigh, content

A Peaceful Journey

A Warrior's Demise

(A haiku by Gusten Gorr)

A Great-Ax plummets

Slicing through my adversary

Metal and flesh fall

The Stupid Half-Orc

(A senryu by Dumaas Rocks)

The ambling Half-Orc

So intent on giving Chase

Slams into a Tree

The Bard's Corner

(A minstrel's musings)

Dragon

(An Acrostic by Big R. Than-yu)

Dreadful **D**rake

Razes, **R**uins

Ancient, **A**geless

Gigantic, **G**argantuan

Obdurate, **O**dious

Never-ceasing **N**arcissist

Magic Fire

(A cinquain by Shu Ting Flame)

Used For

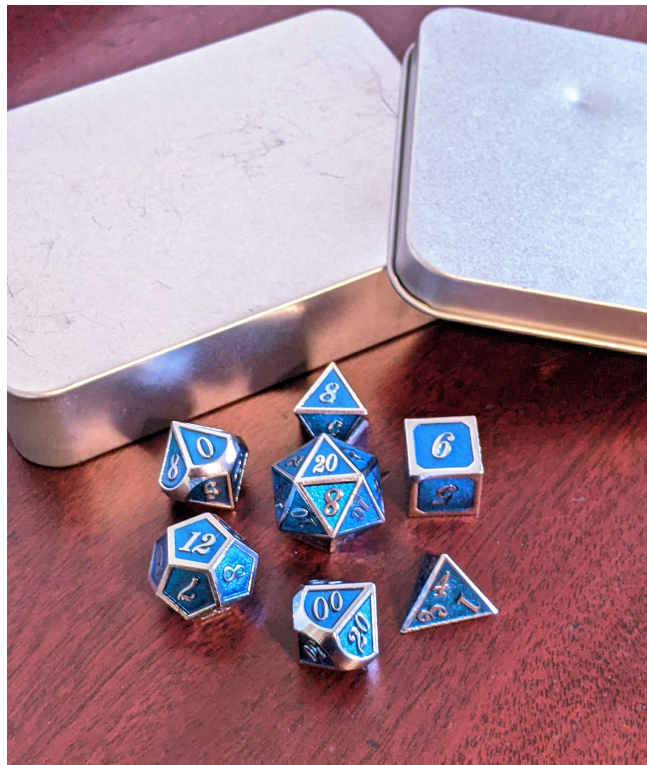
Blessing, Cursing

Assisting, Hindering

Beautiful Deadly Inferno

Your Choice

THE DIE GUY



How much did you spend on your dice? Was it worth it? Could you have spent your hard earned money in a more thoughtful and calculating purchase? Was it worth it? Find out in this review.

As I lifted the top case off of my rectangular metal box of freshly minted cobalt blue die, shivers of grand anticipation careened down and throughout my spine. As I pried the dice out of their foam insert, I knew that they have been extremely well protected. I raised the d20 into the air marveling at the density and the

heaviness of the jagged-edged, steel, geometrical shape. As I let the cool metal run along and off my palm, it plummeted through the air, slicing it as easily as a shark fin glides through water. It landed on the table resonating with a very audible and satisfying thud. It shuddered to a halt showing a perfect, Natural 20.

Surely these wonderful dice must only for the elite you think. This is true, as the dice will only be purchased by the strong, dedicated, talented, wonderful, D&D player.

In all consideration this purchase paid off for me. Maybe it will for you too.



In Vain

(A Balled by Noser N. Derr)

Once there was a man
A man of prestigious
skill

He was known from all
over For his impressive
kills

And he went to join a war
And was named their hero with glee
For even the generals all tucked away in their
shelters Had heard of his amazing techniques

But woe was destined for this
war Doom was sure indeed
For the men who were the foe
Had a monstrosity

A man, the largest you've ever seen
At ten feet tall
He made Goliath look small
They said he was the champion to
beat

The battle began to rage
And the arrows rained down
Cov'ring the ground
Who would win destiny's stage



Two eyes searched the field
The other they sought in duel
The light gleamed in their eyes
It shone, cold and cruel

Their swords clashed in
earnest The men cheered, for
This was battle real
Their sweat poured as a furnace

The duel went on and on
With no intention of
stopping The foes circled on
That carnage stricken battle field

Long past the battle of Kor
The men, evenly matched
Waited for Chance
To decide this deadly war

Suddenly, one of them fell
The other cried in triumph
“I have conquered the maxim foe”
But soon, he too lay on that battlefield

Died for Glory
Died without reason
Each fallen at the hands of the other
Fallen at the hands of will

Alone they died, no one to care
And perhaps we will as well
If we pursue that kind of glory



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THE OTHER

(A found poem by Madge Esty)

Sparkling eye of triumph

Followed by a tremendous shout

Of rapturous delight

The Other

Burning in Agony

Sees his Path

Sees

Sees in grievous reverie

A despairing shriek

Of Regret

The Other lost

Triumphed led forth



The Remarkable Sleeping Properties of Dungeons and Dragons

You are perusing the Players Handbook for ideas for a new and truly powerful character. Suddenly, inspiration strikes, and your eyes glow with excitement. Your mother leans over and asks what is causing you to act as if you actually had a light bulb over your head. You tell her that she wouldn't understand, but she insists and you divulge the idea. You start explaining how if you gain two levels in Warlock Pact of the Genie, then triple multi-class with 8 levels of Cleric in either the Knowledge or Light Domain,

and then take 10 levels of Wizard School of Evocation and chose the Antagonizing Blast Invocation while getting your Wisdom, Charisma, and Intelligence scores all up to 20, you gain a +21 damage to your Eldritch Blast.

You lean for your Players Handbook to show her, but when you turn around you find her eyes glazed over while she is slumping over in her seat. She made a mistake. She really didn't want to know.



You realize that you have forgotten. She is a mother. She does not hold (or want to hold) even the most rudimentary D&D knowledge. You say her name

several times before her eyes pop back into focus and she resumes cooking your dinner.

A couple days later the same thing happens again; you come up with a brilliant idea and start to explain about how to improve upon the Coffee-lock. You turn around to find her drooling all across the front of her shirt. You decide that your wisdom had better be contained to yourself.

But alas, this you can not do. It happens all over again and you give in to her curiosity. This time you grab your book to show her a loophole in the rules. It takes less than 3 seconds, but when you turn around. she is sound asleep, slumped over the kitchen counter, head resting against her recipe book. You gently shake her awake. She wakes up with a start and resumes cooking like nothing has happened.

A few weeks later, she has a horrible cold. You wake up in the middle of the night to find her on the couch looking miserable. She sees you and calls you to come closer. You oblige, and she gives you a very strange suggestion. “I have been wanting to learn about the game that you like, I forgot its name, and since we are both awake I figured that you could explain the basics to me.” You are shocked and in your sleepy state of mind, explain the easiest parts of D&D to her. You find yourself growing quite animated. You finish your long and passionate speech and wish her good luck on falling to sleep. You hear no reply. You turn around to find your mother is fast asleep on the couch. You wonder if this was her real intention all along. You head back to your room and fall asleep to thoughts of Dungeons and Dragons.

The Curse of the Tome

Bo the Halfing strolled leisurely into the classroom of the Narguz Institute, his small stature allowing him to fit through the door frame easily. “Am I late?” he droned, uninterested.

**“Am I late?” he droned,
uninterested**

“Yes! My class finished 2 hours ago,” thundered Mr. Beakensworth, his fiery haired, fiery tempered teacher. “This is the last time!” roared the enraged teacher. “You’d be packing your things right now if it were up to me. But it’s not. You’d best prepare for fearsome lecture at the hands of our ‘mighty and strict’ principal.”

Bo knew he was right and it didn’t faze him. The Principal fazed no one. In fact, his comparatively small size to most humans, and his peaceful aura tended to do the opposite of what was desired by Mr. Beakensworth.

Bo covered the short distance to his dormitory quickly and lay back down in bed, resuming what he had been doing before the brief five minutes of interruption—nothing. No thinking, no anything, just utter, complete, blissful nothing. It was what he had been doing all his life, so much so that he measured time away from his bed rather than in it. He heard a knock on the door. “Come in,” he yelled, unwilling to get out of bed.

The Principal strode in and announced in his low soothing voice, “I have brought you a gift.”

“I have brought you a gift”

Bo opened his eyes a little more, pretending not to be interested. “What?” He knew it was probably just an alarm clock or day planner like his previous gifts from the Principal. The Principal set the package he had been holding onto Bo’s desk.

“I have brought you a book in hope you will be able to read it. I’ve had it for many years but I’ve never been able to read it. I have high hopes that you will succeed where I have failed.”

Bo’s mind was buzzing. What could be in that book? What could the scholarly Principal not be able to read? And why was he chosen for such a task? He had no qualifications that he could think of but perhaps... His train of thought was cut short as the Principal continued.

“If you can read this book within ten days, I will pass you with a one hundred percent grade and you will never have to do school at this institute ever again. I hope you will not leave this chance unused.” And with that, he walked out of the door, leaving Bo to wonder. What was in that book?

“I have high hopes that you will succeed where I have failed”

He picked up the package and lay back in his bed. Carefully unwrapping it, he saw the book for the first of many times. An eye sat in the middle of the cover, surrounded by semi-precious stones. He opened it and then discovered, to his dismay, that the inside was covered in runes spread all over the page, as if the scribe had suddenly gone mad.

It seemed as if the great terrible eye promised vast stores of knowledge.

From that first moment the Tome captivated him, leaving him to wonder what could be behind those pages. It seemed as if the leather bound cover with the great terrible eye promised vast stores of mystical secrets and arcane knowledge. He decided that it would be more work to decipher this tome than to keep inventing excuses to not show up to class. He discarded the book on his desk, then lay down to rest. But his eyes and his curiosity were drawn back to the book. He found he could not sleep- something that had never occurred before. He was drawn to the book, and he could not stop thinking about it.

The book called to him.

What secrets did it hold? How could he decipher this tome? The book called to him but, in the end, it was his curiosity that chained him. He went to his desk and opened the book once more, and as before encountered the pages of undecipherable

runes. He slaved away at his desk, trying desperately to find the key to these cryptic runes. Sweat poured down his forehead as he labored for the fourth hour in a row. He heard the call for lights out, but paid no heed, so great was his concentration. He worked through the night, and as the sun rose, he cried out for the book to stop tormenting him. With great effort, pulled himself into bed. But as he lay there trying to ignore the book and its summonings, his curiosity pulled him, once more, to his desk. As he worked, it occurred to him that perhaps the answer could be found in the school archives.

He left his desk and walked to the school archives, the largest in the province. As he entered he heard a stifled scream come from the librarian.

“You! Here! On a Saturday! I can’t believe it!” whispered an extremely shocked librarian.

Bo realized that he had lost track of time, and today was Saturday, a day that he had no obligations and wouldn't normally get out of bed.

"Yes, I have something I need to do." he said to an unbelieving librarian.

"You! Do something!" exclaimed an even more shocked librarian.

At this point, Bo realized that he had no hopes of convincing her that this wasn't just an elaborate prank and decided to just place the book on the desk. Her eye brows went straight to the top of her head.

"Aren't you a little young to begin to try to decipher a Tome of Secrets?"

"A Tome of Secrets?" he asked a little scared but mostly curious.

"Yes, a Tome of Secrets. A magical book ciphered so intricately that even the author forgets how to solve it. Tomes of this kind almost never get solved. Only a few people in history have ever solved one. Most have spent their entire lives trying. I

suggest that you stop before you get started."

"Who did you say solved a Tome of Secrets?" Asked a fascinated Bo.

"One you would probably be familiar with is the Principal. That's how he got his job."

"Really? He gave me this book."

"In that case, he probably wants you to solve it. Here are some books on languages, and some on codes, and here are some more on runes, and one about the history of ciphers like this one."

Bo looked up at the massive pile of books teetering above him. "Thank you" he gulped and managed to carry the books back to his dorm before they collapsed to the ground.

He got straight to work. Hour after hour he read these books, trying every thing saw, until he found a paragraph in a book on codes. "Some coded messages can be solved by finding a picture painted by the

code smith. This may be the key to their puzzle.” He looked in the center of the eye and saw the name Edward P. Slagnohn hidden. He knew that the Principal was the oldest person at the school and went straight to him. As he entered the yellowing walls of a once white Principal’s office he saw the Principal sitting at his desk.

“What can I do for you on this fine day?” said the Principal.

Bo immediately asked, “Do you know a man by the name of Edward P. Slagnohn?”

“Do you know a man by the name of Edward P. Slagnohn?”

The Principal laughed, a great jolly booming sound. “Yes you could say that.”

“Would you happen to have a painting by him?”

“Yes, I do indeed, he is a horrible artist, but I have kept it for sentimental reasons”

All of this puzzled Bo, and almost nothing was hard enough to puzzle Bo.

“May I see the painting, Sir?”

“Why, yes indeed. It is right in here.”

It was a truly hideous thing, covered in angry blotches. It appeared to be a duck, but it was so obscure that one couldn’t tell.

“Well, now you’ve seen it, do you need anything else”

“No. Thank you, Sir.”

When Bo returned to his room, he puzzled over how this painting could be any sort of key and why the Principal even had it. After several hours of thinking, he realized that the ugly splotches could be the key to his problem. He recalled the placement of the splotches and recreated them on a piece of paper. He then cut them out and moved them around, trying to find a connection. His eyes fell on the paper with holes in it. The world seemed to slow around him.

The world seemed to slow around him.

He grabbed the paper and placed it over the first page. The places he had cut out overlapped two-thirds of the symbols and lined up exactly. He had the key. After that, it was many long hours of translating from different languages, but it was worth it. He had solved the Tome of Secrets.

Peace. Something that can't be appreciated until it's gone. Not any more. Bo was determined to enjoy every minute of it. But though he had solved the book, his bed didn't seem as appealing anymore. Bo felt the need to run outside and enjoy the day. But he still had one more mystery to solve...

Bo stepped into the Principal's office. Questions whirled around in his mind. Who was Edward, why did the Principal have a picture by him? And why did the Principal give him a Tome of

Secrets? He saw the Principal fiddling with a mechanical bird.

Before Bo could speak the Principal announced in his low booming voice: "I'm sure you have many questions, but first come and sit. I feel that this will be a long meeting."

"Sir, I was wondering why you have a painting by Edward."

"There is is a short answer to that question. The reason is... because I am Edward."

Bo's head spun. The Principal had written the book. Why? How? When? Again, before Bo could voice his questions, the Principal answered them.

"You have many questions. I was once like you, a lazy but intelligent and curious boy. I was given a book such as yours; it took me many years to solve it, but I did. It contained much knowledge. I wrote my own Tome of Secrets in the hope that I could other find students who were like

myself to gift them to. You were one of them.”

“But what of your job, how did you get that?” Bo inquired.

“In my travels I learned that there was a certain school that offered Principalship to any one intelligent enough to solve a Tome of Secrets. I saw this position as a chance to further my mission. I was given the job upon proving that I had indeed solved a Tome of Secrets. I had been working here for many years when I first met you. I gave you opportunities, but I soon realized that while you had the potential, you had not the desire. I knew firsthand how frustrating a Tome of Secrets could be, so I tried to give you other ways of improving your work ethic. But I suppose I knew from the beginning that you could not be cured in any other way. I gave you the book in hopes that you could solve it. I knew that I could not solve your problem. Only you could. You have

exceeded my expectations greatly. Now I am ready to honor my promise, for I believe that the book can be a far greater teacher than any this school could produce. I only have two pieces of advice for you. Heed what knowledge is in that book, and work hard, for it can lead to good things.”

As Bo went outside to sit on a bench, he held the decoded book in his hands. Its pages were now covered with notes in plain language, but its complicated phrases were still hard to understand. The book still called to him but its roaring had turned into a quiet purr. Only one thing was for certain, it contained great knowledge. It was strange how his torturer could become his teacher. As he felt the wind blowing on his face he felt for the first time in his life- ready.

**It was strange how his
torturer could become his
teacher.**

MY ADVENTURES FOR THE DRAGON SPICE

It all started when my mom wanted to try a new recipe... I was asked to run over to the City of Brass on the Elemental Plane of Fire to buy her some Dragon Spice. So I asked around and found a guy who said that he knew a map to a portal that would take me there. I went to this guy's shop and asked for the map.

"Ha, Ha, Ho." he boomed, "You thought I had it. It was taken from me by some goblins. Should be on the second floor of their fort, just south-west of here."

And that was how my journey started. I snuck into the fort -Goblins are horrible lookouts- and looked in their treasure room. There was no map. I searched long and hard. Still no map. So I went back, and the Goblins spotted me, and I barely avoided the hail of arrows that came down.

I came back to the guy and he said "Oh, after you left I found the map in my back pocket. I feel a tiny bit guilty so you can have the map for free." I stomped out of there fuming.

On opening the map, I discovered that the portal was in another city. I began walking. Soon, I was ambushed by the Goblins' friends: the Orcs. As the ax whirled past my head, I started running. I didn't stop until I had reached the other city. I wandered around the city until I had found the Portal in the main square with people walking in and out.

I started to walk through, and someone pulled me back by my shoulder and said, "You gotta pay me da tax." I protested saying that all the other people didn't have to pay the tax.

I was met with a response. "They don't need to pay the tax." I needed to be on my way, so I payed him a hefty sum and walked through.

I had heard that there was a one in a billion chance that you would not be reconstructed correctly on the other side of a portal. I guess I just didn't get lucky. I looked up and saw my left pinkie gazing innocently up at me. After much time gathering of my limbs and

digits, I was ready to continue on my way. After a time of walking, I raised my hand to my forehead to wipe sweat off my brow. I realized it was missing, so I headed back and collected my eyebrows.

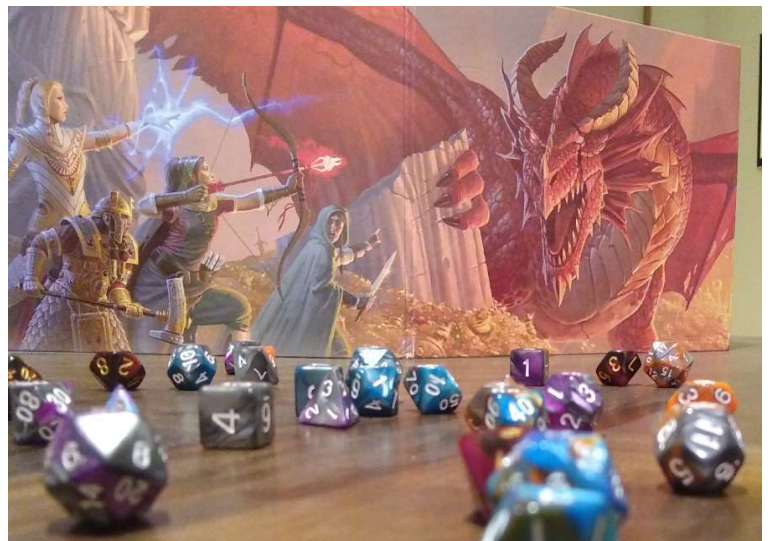
I spied the famous Brass Domes, which were my destination, to the west and started walking. I raised my hand to my newly recovered eyebrows to shield my eyes from the glare of the three setting suns.

As I raised and lowered my feet for the 3 billionth time, I realized with a start that I was caught in the middle of a dragon war. The details are too gruesome to recount here, so I will summarize. It was horrible, and there was fire everywhere. I ran out of there barely escaping with my life, but when I looked up and saw the shining domes, I knew I had finally made it to the City of Brass.

I paid a hefty toll to enter the city and beheld the wonders of the City of Brass. It took me hours to find the correct stall in that huge market of Pyraculum. I paid my last penny to get the Dragon Spice. I traveled uneventfully back

to my mother by way of one of the large public portals.

I was tired, but I kept myself going long enough to give my mother the Spice and then collapsed on the couch. The last words I heard before I fell asleep were my mother's. "Why didn't you just take the portal in the backyard?"



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TERRIAN GOAT-FEATHER AND THE MIND-FIRE

Boom. That's how he woke up

every morning. Boom. In some cases like this one, it was far from morning. Boom. He had lived here, every day, for eight years. The toil had shaped him; the pain had forged him. There was nothing for it. He got up and walked to his door. Soon the booms faded into the background as he walked to the Gorilla's office.

He felt a hand on his shoulder and a voice booming, "Well, if it isn't Terrian Goatfeather, he of mighty courage! Do you know how you got that name? Scared as a Goat, quick to flight as a bird. So that's what we called you."

**"Scared as a goat,
quick to flight as a
bird."**

The man, whose name was Thuebor, guffawed at his own joke. "Why, what are you doing up so early in our grand city of Hell-Fire? Scared out of bed?" Terrian looked around the town. He was certain there was nothing in it that could be called grand.

**Terrian looked around
the town. He was
certain that nothing in
it could be called
grand.**

Thuebor resumed his talk, “I believe that you still owe me fifty Meteors, so how ‘bout you pay up.”

“I haven’t gotten paid yet,” Terrian mumbled.

“Why do you involve me in such trivial matters? You have till sunset.” And with a mighty chuckle Thuebor strode off to get some more money from unsuspecting citizens.

Terrian shook his head and wondered if he could get an advance from the Gorilla. As he walked into the Gorilla's office, he wondered for the hundredth time how Gorilla got his name.

“It’s Thunder Monkey five! What are you waiting for? Get in here!” called out the Gorilla's voice.

The Gorilla was a tall man, easily seven feet. His beard was as large as Terrian, and his forceful personality hung over Terrain like the black smog that permeated Hell-Fire.

“Yes, sir. Sorry, sir. Right away, sir. Here and reporting for duty, sir.” Terrian groveled.

“Do you know what today is for you Thunder Monkey Five?”

“Payday, sir?”

“No, you bumbling idiot! Today marks the day when you first joined the company ten years ago. In honor of today I’m giving you... three extra shifts! What are you standing around for? Get to work!”

“Yes, sir,” and with that, Terrian stumbled out of the Gorilla's office and into the mines.

**Many men died
everyday from
overwork, overheat,
and underpay.**

The mines were the only way to make a living in Hell-Fire, unless you counted Thuebor’s debt collection business. The mines were not a great places to work.

Many men died everyday from overwork, overheat, and underpayment.

But not Terrian, and he wasn't sure if that was a good thing or not.

"Stop starin' and get down here, Terrian. You're one of our last Thunder Monkeys," called yet another voice.

"But what about numbers one through a thousand?"

"Most called in dead, some sort of disease- Mind-Fire I think they called it. The Pit is filled with half dead, screaming men. Thuid said that we should kill them all now and spare the city, but I told him no, we can't do that to a comrade. Enough talk. Get the #@!* down here."

Terrian rushed down, for nobody wanted to be the object of the Primate's wrath. Great, three shifts with four times the work, Terrian thought as he rushed to set the thunder charges. It went on like this for 16 hours, with one yelling at him to "get over

here" and him rushing to do the job.

Eventually, it was over and he stepped outside and panic immediately gripped his heart. The street was littered with thousands of people, all of them screaming in agony and clutching their heads. The Mind-Fire must have engulfed the city as he labored below. And then Terrian did what Terrian did best. He ran.

Terrian did what Terrian did best. He ran.

He ran out of the city. He kept running even when night fell, until he fell to the ground exhausted. Fear is a powerful thing. It had a strong hold on Terrian now and wasn't keen on letting go. In a panic, Terrian took stock of his situation. He had one quake charge in his pack and the soot-stained smelly clothes on his back. No food. No water. He tried summon what he knew about Mind-Fire out of the great swamp that

was his memory. He remembered what Thuid had said about the sickness. Suddenly, Thuid's voice rose more clearly out of his mind.

Mind-Fire is a deadly plague...

"Mind-Fire is a deadly plague that takes hold of its carrier's mind. It is said that the carrier will seem normal for one week after catching the plague. After which a whispery voice will rise out of his mind, confusing him at every turn. A small growth will appear on his forehead and will grow continue to grow throughout the course of the disease. Some days later, the victim will experience mind-wrenching pain for three weeks before he dies."

Terrian thought this voice was a little too real to be mere memory and looked around for Thuid, but he dismissed it as his current state of exhaustion. He spread out under a lone tree and was asleep before he knew it.

Cruel laughter rose out of Terrian's mind.

Terrian woke up to a howling. It permeated the air around him and seemed to have no source. He got up and started running. Hour after hour he ran, pursued by the primal howls. Then all sound ceased. Nothing could be heard. Suddenly, cruel laughter rose out of Terrian's mind. The sound grew, and then it stopped. Terrian realized the enemy was in his mind. His mind raced. Or was it the unwelcome guest? He needed a cure, that was for sure. What was the cure? Where was the cure? How could he get the cure? He tried to delve into his memory once more and found only a dense fog obscuring it. The cure. Was it a weed? Perhaps it was a flower. Was it in the mountains, or was it found only by the seashore?. He felt as if he was groping

about in a dark room full of items and he didn't know what he was looking for.

Panic gripped him as the voice returned. "You are my newest victim. There is no hope. Resist, and you will die painfully. Relinquish control, and you will also die painfully. There is no hope." The voice chuckled at this, and then continued, "Give up, everyone will die. You will die. There is no hope. Give up..." The voice trailed off into nothingness. Terrian's judgment was clouded, for though the voice was gone, it was still toying with his mind.

The two voices in his head had merged into one. There was no difference between the two. Which was his own and which was the other's? He did not know. He knew that he must find a city where the cure was common. He walked forward, for he could not think of where to go. When he came to a mountain, he climbed over it. When he came to a lake, he swam through it. Animals fled at the sight of him, knowing

that he carried the universally reviled disease. Four days passed. He kept walking. A constant howling assaulted what was left of his mind. He was a man under siege from the inside. Soon he became incapable of making decisions. He kept walking. His mind stopped functioning all together. He was left as an empty shell.

The Mind-Fire was toying with him.

When his sentience returned to him he was outside a large town. It seemed that the fog had left him, and now though the time may be short, he had complete control over his own mind. He had the feeling that the Mind-Fire was toying with him, letting him believe that he was safe and could get the cure, when in reality, the disease was watching his every move, preparing to tear his mind away from him. He saw the gate placed in the high, barricaded, wooden walls of the town. He dashed to the small,

unimpressive metal gate. Two men rushed out.

“The Marked of the Mind-Fire are not allowed within the city premises,” they announced in unison. “Leave or be destroyed.”

Just then Terrian noticed the large cloths that hung from their heads, leaving only their eyes exposed. “This is your last warning,” they declared simultaneously. Their fingers twitched toward the twisted metal crossbows that they wore on their backs, and Terrian saw that the only qualms they would have about firing were that they would risk being contaminated when they had to transport his corpse to a grave.

Terrian slowly backed away and said, “I mean you and your town no harm. My only wish is that some cure could be brought to me.”

The men laughed. “Your wish is refused. Our healers can not risk being

exposed. You will now leave or we will be forced to fire.”

Terrian turned and ran. Tears streamed down his face, produced by the sadness that only a doomed man can feel. He found a grove of trees and sat thinking about what he had done in life.

The voice started cackling “You now see my true curse. There is no hope. Give Up. Die alone. Alone, where no one can help you. Where no one one can hear you. Alone....”

And for the first time, Terrian replied to the Mind-Fire. “No! I will fight, and I will fight to the last breath! You shall take no more from me .”

“Very well, you shall try. Oh, you shall try desperately, and I will let you. Soon you will give up. Give up your life, your hope, your sanity. And you shall fall back into the depths of pain that I bring. I will destroy you. Your spirit, your hope,

your sanity. You shall be gone. Gone forever....”

Suddenly, Terrian felt that which makes men rise beyond themselves . Hope spread through him. He knew that he had to try.

Suddenly, Terrian felt that which makes men rise beyond themselves.

Late that night, he peered with longing at the landscape before him. He was looking in to the town. He knew there must be some cure in there. He had to find it. The hope within threatened to wane. Then, to his joy, he saw the sign of the healer. It was on the opposite side of the wall. He could never have imagined that such a commonplace sign could hold the key to his entire future. He grinned, for he had bested his captor.

The next morning the town was racked with a deafening boom. Through the

now obliterated wall of the Healer’s Workshop, shambled a half dead Terrian.

The last thing Terrian saw before he blacked out was the amused expression that covered the Healer’s face.

He was trapped, trapped in his own mind. Or was it the Mind-Fire’s mind now? Darkness coated it. The air was almost impossible to breathe. It reminded him of Hell-Fire. A light shown through the darkness, cutting it away.

A different voice spoke out, “Welcome to my fine Workshop, or at least is was before you came along. Now, let’s see what I can do for you.”

Terrian felt fingers prodding his forehead and cool liquid being poured down his throat. And then the pain receded. Terrian slept for a week straight.

He had many conversations in that time, for though his body was asleep, his mind would not rest. It had been restrained for so long, used for evil purposes, that it

wanted to consume knowledge. The Healer seemed to know this and spent hours telling him about Mind-Fire, its cure, and its history.

As soon as his body fully awoke, the Healer announced, “Good, you are awake. Now I must run an examination to see if your mind has cleared. Take note that, while this test produces almost perfect results, there is a chance that you are just an idiot.”

“What are you testing for?”

“Traces of the Mind-Fire disease. Now let us begin. What is your name?”

“Terrian Goatfeather. Why do you need to know?”

“Just making sure that you weren’t replaced with an evil twin and making sure that your long-term memory is working. Now, what will you do now that you are cured?”

“I... I don’t know. I suppose that I will try to find another mining town and

start a new life there. I didn’t have time to think about that while I was coming here.”

“I know that, that’s why I asked.

Now that I have established that you do not have a predetermined answer to this question, we can continue. Think well upon this subject, for it will determine your future and the future of others.”

“How will that be? I have no family or friends.”

“The answer lies in your past.”

“Forget about Hell-Fire. I’m not going back into that den of sickness. I already almost died several times, and I’m not going to let it happen anymore.”

“Lives depend on you, Terrian,”

“Even if I did go back, you would never have enough cure for the entire population.”

“No, but you could grow some.”

“But you said that the cure can only be grown into a place of... heat. I see what

you wish to do. You want to make a profit off of my risk!”

“If I had wanted to make a profit off of you, I wouldn’t have given you the cure for free. In fact, if I had wanted to make a profit off of you, you would be fixing my wall right now.”

“I suppose you are right, but what you are asking now is even worse. You are demanding your payment at the cost of my life.”

“You believe everything and everyone wants to harm you. Hell-Fire must be a painful place.”

“Hell-Fire was worse than words can describe. Do you know why I stayed there? Do you? It was because I had no where else to go. Now I have a perfect opportunity to leave that life behind. Why would I return?”

**“Mind-Fire may have
a simple cure**

but fear doesn’t.”

“You left out of fear, don’t let it control the rest of your decisions. Mind-Fire may have a simple cure, but fear doesn’t. And fear is the worst of the two. Now, I would like to know. Why did you stay?”

“It was because I couldn’t leave.”

“Is that true? You came to me with nothing. You left with nothing but the clothes on your back and the quake charge that was in your hand. You could’ve left whenever you wanted to. You knew that as well. I think you stayed out of loyalty. Loyalty to your town and loyalty to your comrades. Fear and loyalty are two powerful forces. Which of the two will govern your choice? Your loyalty or your fear? The decision is not without peril. The choice is yours.”

When Terrian arose the next day, he had his answer. “I will go.”

How to Make Can(dy)trips

Have you ever wondered what a Cantrip would taste like. Mm-mm delicious Eldritch Blast. Probably not though. I'm here to satisfy this curiosity if you have it and teach you how to make a delicious snack if you don't.

First, we are going to need to gather some ingredients. Unlike most Cantrips, Candy-Trips can't be cast with a snap of your fingers. The Material Components you'll need are 6 cups of granulated sugar, 2 cups of water, some gel food coloring, string, 4 jars, 4 chopsticks, and either ½ teaspoon of flavoring oils or 1 teaspoon of extract. It doesn't matter what flavors you have, this spell isn't picky. Your color determines which Cantrip you are going to cast so you will need to choose wisely.

I suggest red for Fire-Bolt, White or Blue for Ray of Frost, Green for Acid Splash, and purple for Eldritch Blast. I am making Eldritch Blasts today so I will mix blue and red food coloring to make a purple color. This spell yields four Candy-Trips and its casting time is about 35 minutes.

Second, pour your 2 cups of water into a medium sized sauce pan or shallow pot. You then cast prestidigitation to light your fire and bring the water to a boil. When it does so, pour the sugar in one cup at a time and cast Unseen Servant or Find Familiar to stir the sugar in or just do it yourself.

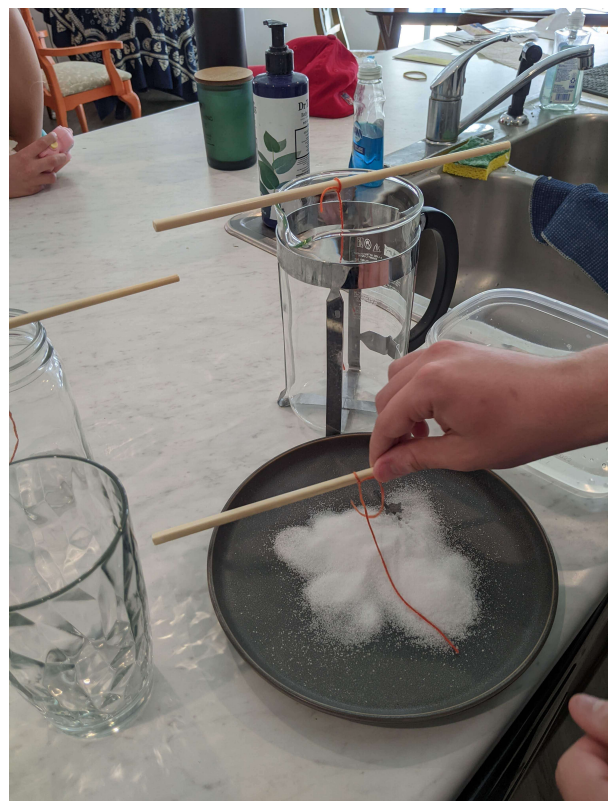
Third, add in your coloring and flavorings. The color will be much darker in crystal form than in liquid. You do not

need to add flavoring but I thought orange would taste like Antagonizing Blast and be tasty so I put it in. When ever this is done let your newly made potion cool until it is room temperature.

Fourth, tie your string around a chopstick so it hangs on inch from the bottom and then wet the strings and roll them in sugar. Place the chopstick on the rim and then pour your potion inside. Put the jar in a safe, cool, dry place and wait 5-9 days for your crystals to fully form. This growing process is the same as for the spell Clone especially the do not disturb part.

Well, that's it. You will probably spill sugar at some point during the casting time so washing it out with a wet rag can help. Make sure to wash it over again after the sugar is gone to ensure that there will not be any sticky spots left.

Gel food coloring is best as its color shows up more. Be careful to not let your Candy-Trips grow on to the jar or else the jar will be hard to clean and the Candy-Trips hard to eat. If it grows on the top of your jar, just have your rouge stab it with a dagger, or a fork if no daggers are available. This snack can be great for D&D parties or sessions. But don't let your rouge steal them all.





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