

An Unexpected Trip

By T. Meadows and D. Albertie

Drake tripped, again, for the third time that day. By this point he was rather tired of tripping, and rather sick of the bruises on his legs. With a sigh he stood up, lamenting the interesting color of his bruised and battered shins. He was then promptly trampled by a mob of students fleeing the premises at the sound of the last bell. Yet again, Drake stood up, and yet again he sighed, for you see, Drake was beset by the rottenest of luck, however, his luck was about to get much worse, though he didn't know it at the time. Glancing around, he made a dash for a side entrance, hoping to escape before yet another unfortunate event was to occur. He opened the door with a great sigh, this time of relief, as nothing had spontaneously combusted during his sprint for freedom. He then turned and gave a slight yip of surprise, for leaning casually against the brick wall of the school, was his friend Matthew, who almost seemed to have been waiting for him. This however would have been impossible, as Drake had used a fairly remote and disused side exit which he had been surprised to find wasn't boarded over, and didn't trigger any emergency alarms. Then again, Matthew always seemed to be beset by quite the opposite kind of luck of Drake's, and Drake generally attributed any of the strange occurrences that followed Matthew, to this. Matthew was grinning, though calling it a simple grin would neither serve Matthew, or the grin, justice. This grin would send most teachers running for the hills, or gibbering to an insane asylum. Unfortunately there were neither hills or an asylum near the town in which Drake lived, so the teachers had to settle for a continued teaching career. Needless to say, this drastically decreased the quality of education at Drake's school. "Sooo... uhh" Drake queried as he tried to regain a semblance of a cool demeanor. "How'd you know I was leaving this way?". Matthew looked him straight in the eyes. "I was waiting for my drug dealer," he said in a deadpan tone. Both of them quickly burst out laughing, though Drake still wondered, and then he once again explained it away as Matthew's strange luck. They then embarked on the legendary journey

down the block, not normally legendary, but it was in this case. Albeit it didn't seem so at the time. About halfway home, as Drake was about to inquire as to who was Matthew's drug dealer, he tripped, though this time not of his own fault. A hole had simply opened in the space time beneath him, and he fell down it. His last thought before he fell was, "Not again damn it."

IT'S GANDALF?!

Drake woke up and approximately three thoughts ran through his head. Where am I, who am I, and why do I feel stoned? The second one came to him in a few seconds, though as he was trying to figure out the first and third, he vomited on a white marble floor. He momentarily felt sorry for the floor, and then remembered that he had fallen on it and it must have knocked him out. He changed his mind and glared at the floor.

Unfortunately, he was soon distracted from this rivetingly important task by a bearded man who looked rather like Gandalf, tapping his staff on the ground. After a moment's bleary thought he realized the man was trying to get his attention, and turned his glare to him. "Wut doo yooouuu wont Gaandalfe?" His words were a bit slurred as his head hadn't quite cleared, but a quick shake like a dog trying to dry itself off cleared his mind. The Gandalf impersonator walked down the steps towards Drake and said, "First things first, I am not that silly wizard Gandalf, I am Merlin, and you will refer to me as such, unless you would prefer to refer to me by my alias, The Grandly Swagical Wizarding Funkmeister." It was at this point that Drake decided that he was either drunk, or asleep, or perhaps still unconscious on the floor. "Well..." Drake said, deciding to humor the old man. "Where exactly am I, and why do I feel stoned?" A girl with red hair, a dragon tail, wings, and horns popped into his field of vision and said, giggling, "You're in Aloria silly." For a moment Drake thought that the voice belonged to Matthew, as it sounded similar, but lilted, unlike Matthew's voice. Also, the girl with the dragon wing's mouth was moving and thus he came to the conclusion that she must be the one talking. Drake then jumped to a second conclusion that he was most definitely drunk. "Alright

then, as that's not on any map that I've seen, I'm going to say that I am most definitely extremely drunk right now, and this is all fake." Drake stated definitively. "And to prove it, I'm going to hit my head on this pillar." The Grandly Swagical Wizarding Funkmeister sighed, "Fine, if you must." and waved Drake on in an motion of tired surrender. Drake then hit his head on the nearest pillar, and it, as he had expected passed through, as that particular pillar was out for maintenance and was only an illusion. "A different pillar," sighed Merlin. Drake hit his head on another pillar. He went unconscious for the second time that day, as this particular pillar, was indeed not out for maintenance. When he awoke he glanced around, saw Merlin and the dragon girl, and dashed for the exit. He was, unfortunately, stopped by a large, gray, hand, connected to a large, gray arm, connected to a large, gray body, which strangely enough was seemingly not connected to a head. Drake then turned around with an amiable smile and walked back towards Merlin and the dragon girl. "Nowwww where were we?" Drake said with a rather forced, rather nervous grin. The dragon girl whispered to Merlin, "Why does he look constipated?"

Actually getting drunk.

Merlin then explained that Drake had accidentally tripped into the world of magic and such and that he had extreme magical potential. "Great, I'll just be walkin on home then if ya don't mind..." Drake said as he took a couple steps back. "Unfortunately that is impossible, unless you would like us to send you back as a corpse. I find that corpses don't share secrets that well." Drake stood there wide eyed, jaw agape. His shock though, quickly turned to anger, and this anger to rage and this rage to fury etc etc etc. He promptly discovered this magical potential Merlin had mentioned before. When you first start magic, it's suggested that you start with little things, like enchanting elephants to be pink, or minor death hexes. Unfortunately Drake had not read the Magic Compendium (#sponsored), and did not know this interesting tidbit of interesting information. Thus, he grabbed his magic potential around the throat, and yanked it out. This had a number of interesting effects, and after effects, though the most apparent

ones at the time were Drake's skin turning dark gray, his hair going white and his ears gaining points. He then lunged forwards to grab Merlin by the throat, much the way he had grabbed his magic potential, but three feet short of Merlin, he fell limp, and unconscious. The dragon girl then tittered with laughter, as Merlin shook his head and went off to write some funky rhymes for the night's dinner. Drake awoke in a room, on a bed, feeling marginally better than when he had been knocked unconscious. The room was of rather fine quality, with a rich red rug, dark wood walls, and a queen sized bed upon which Drake was currently resting. Drake also registered that there was a chair in the corner of the room, however it took him a few more seconds to register that Matthew was sitting in the chair. Drake then struggled to sit up but only succeeded in falling out of the bed, which would have brought his count of tripping for the day to four, a personal record, had it been the same day. Matthew shook his head and helped Drake back up into bed. "Thanks, so I'm gonna assume I hit my head on the concrete and none of the previous couple of strange events have happened?" Matthew shook his head. "Damn it," cursed Drake. "Well, it's not all that bad," consoled Matthew. "At least you didn't have to listen to one of Merlin's raps." Drake grinned weakly and shimmied into a sitting position in bed. "Ya, that would have been insult to injury. By the way, who was the dragon chick?" Matthew's face went grave. "She's my sister." Drake blinked "Riiiiighhhhtttt just like you were waiting for your drug dealer earlier" Matthew sighed. "No, she's my sister, don't ask how, don't ask why." "How?" Matthew put his hand to his forehead and proceeded to drag it down his face as if trying to pull off his skin. "Let's not go over that for now, don't want to be giving you any ideas." Drake frowned, wondering what ideas he would be given, and then promptly decided to discontinue that path of thought as to not get any ideas, a rather simple task for Drake. "So what now?" he asked, curious and more than a bit apprehensive as to what awaited him past the doors of his room. He then realized that one door was the entrance to a closet and then wondered what was past the one door of his room instead of both doors, though he was curious as to whether there might literally be a monster in his closet. "It's under the bed" stated Matthew

with a slight grimace of distaste. Matthew was obviously not a fan of the monsters under the bed. Drake screwed up his face in a confused look, or perhaps he was attempting to touch his nose to his forehead. "What?" "The monster, It's under the bed." "You're kidding." "No" said Matthew flatly. "There's a monster under each bed to deter spirits from bothering a sleeping wizard, though on a slightly brighter note, It's dinner time." Matthew's smile returned. Drake grinned apprehensively, wondering what all that dinner entailed.

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At this time, another quite more serious conversation was being held in the grand hall between Merlin and shadowy figure dressed within a black cowl, his face obscured by roiling fog. Merlin whispered, "You promised not to return." The figure let out a keening burst of discordant pitches that might have been either laughter or an asthma attack. "I go where I please wizard supreme, I hold no fear of your petty laws, for my fate is tied to the dark one's." Merlin's eyes crackled with sparks of fire, bolts of lightning, and various party favors, the silly wizard suddenly seeming much more foreboding. "Begone oh shadow dark and foul, out with you, out with you and your silly mourner's cowl" Light flooded the room as the spirit hissed and dispersed, with a fading promise. "This is far from over.." Merlin crumpled into his seat with a sigh, suddenly seeming ancient and dry, before rising to his feet again, his eyes shadowed by a faint dullness, as he jovially greeted the first arrivers to dinner who had just opened the doors, oblivious to the previous drama and the pile of confetti where the ghoul had been standing.

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Matthew led Drake out of his room and down a myriad of confusing corridors, ranging from medieval, to bright pink, for whatever reason. Drake peered down a particular corridor with a sign over the entrance that read , "No entrance (no not even if you feel like it), no swimming, no loitering, and no looking down this corridor." He quickly turned away and walked stiffly forwards beside Matthew. He didn't completely relax until after dinner. What he saw will assuredly be mentioned later in this narrative, else it

wouldn't be mentioned at all. Think of it as a topic of suspense. In any case, Drake and Matthew arrived at the dining hall, which, Drake was surprised to see, was the same room he had originally arrived in, and was relieved to see that his mess had been cleaned up prior to the meal. Drake was also surprised by the sheer volume of the room, supported by soaring marble pillars, one of which, was of course, out for maintenance. The ceiling was decorated by various murals, which were much too high to discern, and no one had taken the time to get large enough a ladder to view the paintings. Once more, Drake was again surprised by the beings at the table in the middle of the large room, which included men and women of the normal, if oddly dressed, sort, and more fanciful beings that seemed only part, or not at all human. A particular being who's clothing left little to the imagination caught his eye for a moment. Her skin was mottled green and brown, and her eyes were emerald green. Matthew had to drag the open mouthed and quite possibly slightly drooling Drake to the table, where he was disappointed to realize that he couldn't see the girl, as for some reason, the table was shaped like an "S". Frowning, he sat in his seat forwards and to the right of Merlin, who was at the head of the table, and across from the dragon girl. Matthew took his seat to the left of Drake, further from Merlin. With this, Merlin gave a curt nod to Drake and stood before the table. Everyone suddenly went quiet as Merlin addressed the attendants of the supper. "Fellow witches, warlocks, and assorted magical beings, I would like to introduce a new attendant of the school of magic.. Drake er.." Merlin bent down to whisper to Drake, "What was your last name again boy?" Drake thought for a moment and realized, as an orphan, he didn't know his last name. "Uhh I don't have one." Merlin whispered urgently, "Then make one up!" Drake stammered for an answer and then said the first two words that came to mind in combination. "Lightningfist." Merlin straightened up and continued as if nothing had happened, although the silence had lasted a good fifteen seconds, and as everyone knows, silence can make fifteen seconds feel like fifteen minutes, and the fifteen seconds had turned quite awkward without Merlin's knowing. "Drake, Lightningfist!". Everyone cheered, though half of them had stopped

listening somewhere in the fifteen second interlude, and had not actually caught the name. “And in honor of this splendiferous occasion, I have created a rap dedicated to young Drake here.” This announcement was greeted by raucous groans and boos, drowning out any attempt at a rap Merlin may or may not have been making. “Fine fine, if that’s the way you’ll have it” grumbled Merlin. “See if I care, eat drink be merry, don’t mind me, I’ll just be in the corner lamenting my under appreciated talent.” Merlin sat down with a huff. It was then that the plates suddenly came to life, and food began magically appearing. Drake glanced around in wonder and then looked down on his own plate as it swished down from the air and onto the place in front of him with a slight clang. On the plate was some form of exotic, and possibly magical or alcoholic fruit with dark gold colored flesh. With a fading ringing sound, the plate seemed to say, “Enjoy.” It was then that Drake began an argument with the whispering plate to give him something else more mundane, but the plate replied that he would enjoy his current meal more, and finally Drake gave in, partially because he had no desire to further argue with his eating utensils, and partially because he was getting some odd looks from nearby wizards. It turned out that he did indeed enjoy his current meal more, it tasted similar to honey with nutty undertones, but he wasn’t telling the plate that. It seemed smug enough as it was. Drake then turned to his cup, which was full of a liquid that seemed to be simultaneously every color in the rainbow at once. He glanced at Matthew, who was grinning wickedly, sipping his slightly less colorful drink. “Uhh Matthew, what is this?” Matthew continued grinning. This was not a good sign. “Just what the cup thinks you’ll most enjoy.” Drake didn’t trust the cup any more than the plate, though he took a sip and his memory of the rest of the night went into oblivion.

Worse than soccer practice

When Drake awoke, he was in his room, with the scantily clad nymph beside him. He shook his head and walked out of his room, only mildly

surprised to see Matthew leaning against the doorframe. "Morning," Drake said groggily. Matthew was grinning like a fool. "Morning, have a good night?" "Probably, what the hell did that cup serve me?" "Exactly what you wanted it to." Drake shook his head and decided not to underestimate the power of the dinner cups, and to never drink anything containing more than three colors again. "Welp, time for your training, follow me if you want to live." Drake didn't know whether or not Matthew was serious, or what had or hadn't happened the previous night, and then followed Matthew down the hall, still wondering about the latter question. He didn't look down the hall with the sign this time. Finally, after once again navigating the dizzying maze of corridors, one of which had walls seemingly made from fire, they reached a room the size of about six football fields lined up in two rows. Drake's mouth fell open, and shut again as he jumped out of the way of a stray fireball, and hit his nearly healed shins on the hard ground. He got up, dusted himself off, and followed Matthew shakily down the steps of the entrance to the room, down to the dusty floor. In different sections around the room, areas were marked off with chalk, and in these areas, different mages were sparring in pairs or groups, magic flying in all directions. Matthew took Drake off to a less crowded corner of the training grounds, and waited patiently as a circle of chalk about ten meters across drew itself around them. Drake attempted to step out of the circle to see what would happen, but found that he couldn't leave, encountering a solid wall of force. "You can't leave," said Matthew, "Until one of us dies." Now, at this point, it would be safe to say that Drake panicked. "Wait what?" "We leave, once one of us dies," explained Matthew patiently. Drake stared blankly. "You're kidding." "No." With this, Matthew flicked his wrist, and a large root sprung from the ground and whipped its way towards Drake. Perhaps now is a good time, as we await Drake's fate, to go over Matthew's appearance, as it so appropriately compliments his magic. Matthew is fairly tall, with dirty blonde hair, green eyes, and a tan complexion. The geneticists at the Department of Magic Hereditary Information, believe him to have some nymph in his background, and perhaps some water spirit. In any case, I'm sure you're dying to see how Drake reacted at this point, and I'm sure he

was too (though probably in a more literal sense). What he did has no explanation, and no precedent in magic, he ran away. In circles. Try as he might, Matthew couldn't hit Drake due to his erratic running patterns. Eventually though he got a lucky shot and knocked Drake over. Panic. Confusion. Pain. Emotional pain. A craving for a cheeseburger. These were the feelings going through Drake's head at the moment as he faced his best friend in a duel to the death. Slowly Drake stood up. He hurt. He didn't know why Matthew was doing this, but he wasn't going to stand there and take it. His eyes narrowed, his fists clenched, and he ran at Matthew. He ran at a fourth rank druid with nothing but his bare fists. This however, was not as absurd as it seems, as his fists were streaming lightning. You see, inadvertently, when Drake had named himself, he had called forth an ancient and elusive spell style that the dark elves used to practice. The science of the connection between magic and names is highly undeveloped, and much is unknown. As such, no one really knows why Drake inherited this power, as others have changed their name legally to lightningfist and not gained powers. As Drake charged forwards, nothing went through his mind along the lines of, "This must be crazy." He was completely focused. Not on Matthew of course, but on his craving for a cheeseburger. Matthew calmly threw up a spiky shield and Drake impaled himself in his wild charge. Drake woke up on the ground outside the circle. He was unhappy to find that he didn't have a cheeseburger. Matthew frowned at him from inside the circle. "Again." Drake stepped wearily back inside the circle. He was promptly impaled by Matthew once again. When his eyes snapped open, he yelled, "What was that? I wasn't ready!" Matthew shrugged, "The vorgles won't care whether you're ready or not." "The hell is a vorgle?" "Nasty gray short beasts. Skin like stone. No shadows." "Whatever." Drake re-entered the arena, and began the process over again. As Drake is currently busy repeatedly dying, we will take this time to explain the circle's magic, and the magic of the training ground. Within the training grounds, which was actually on a different dimensional plane, only spirits may be seen, to prevent physical distractions. The circle, causes the spirit to leave the body and thus leaves the body outside the

circle. The spirit then returns to the body when it is killed and reboots. After a couple dozen deaths, Drake had improved marginally, and was, no pun intended of course, dead tired. As they left the training room, Drake was surprised to find that it was already time for dinner, as time passes differently in spirit realms, as time usually only flies in this way when one is having fun, and Drake was most certainly not having fun. As he trundled to the dining hall behind Matthew, Drake lamented that this was much worse than soccer practice which he had never enjoyed. This kind of day repeated in more or less the same way for a while, until Merlin had to rap.

Merlin raps and it's not of good quality.

On the seventeenth day after the beginning of Drake's training, which was also the first day he managed to kill Matthew (he still didn't get a cheeseburger and he couldn't convince the plate to give him one), Merlin stood up at the head of the table much as he had on the day that Drake had arrived. Or, technically, the day after, as Drake has spent the first day of his arrival unconscious. "My friends," Merlin addressed the audience. "I have been working on a great piece of art for some time now, and I have found that my heart compels me to share it with you. Do not waste your breath, as no amount of naysaying and booing shall dissuade the passion in my heart." There were a few grumbles and groans, but the general consensus of the audience was one of resignation. Merlin cleared his throat, cleared it again, and put on a pair of dark sunglasses. "Yo, its Merlin here, king of wizards and and slayer of babes so dear, I was born to rap, so lend an ear. I've slain fire lizards, wielding naught but chicken gizzards, I'm cooler than a frezian draken, and sweet dank lines I'm not lackin, so fool listen up..." From this point forwards, even reading the rap would literally destroy your mind and consciousness as it degraded to rambling madness that tore at the balance of magic and the universe itself. Something had to snap, and near the conclusion of Merlin's epic, it did. Demons began to swarm from the crux of sandwich, fueled by the pain and misery and over all cringyness embodied by Merlin's rap. This crux opened across the Atlantic ocean, in England, many miles from Aloria, which was currently

located in the Bronx, per the whims of Merlin. This momentarily horrendous event seemed lost upon Merlin, who obliviously continued his rap to the finish. After he was done, he glanced at everyone's faces. Everyone was horrified, and he wondered for a moment if his rap had been so skillfully delivered it had overloaded their brains. He then sensed the breaking of the crux and assumed a horrified expression as well. "The crux of sandwich... has been broken." monotoned Merlin. It was at this point that everyone got out their panic in a screaming, flopping mass. After numerous calls to order by various individuals, Matthew finally got up on the table, and restrained everyone with magically summoned tree roots. "Listen!" yelled Matthew, "We have to take action!" then, not really knowing anything of the general nature of the crux of sandwich, released his hold on the roots and deferred to Merlin. Merlin dusted himself off. "Well, er, yes, the crux of sandwich... nasty business if you ask me, made back in England in the dark days, among the dragon slaying and all that. They didn't even cook the dragons! Can you believe it? But the crux of sandwich, had a key, though I lost it some time ago somewhere in the filing cabinet." Merlin shrugged sheepishly. Everyone sighed with relief and trekked to the filing cabinet. What most of them were unaware of was that the filing cabinet was actually an infinite space where magical beasts were banished, and where various villains awaited trial. Three wizards died in the mad rush to escape. One had his head ripped in half, another suffered a fatal and completely coincidental stroke, and a third accidentally turned himself into a rabbit. One fellow was inexplicably turned pink. Once gathered back in the dining hall, Merlin cleared his throat. "Yes, well should have been more specific about what all the filing cabinet entailed. In any case, a quest to remake the key must be undertaken. I propose a scavenger hunt! Whoever can find all the pieces wins! And now, before you pair off into groups, I would like to remind you about the anti-interwizard violence commission. If you kill anyone on another team, your dessert privileges will be revoked for a week." Merlin wagged his finger and stared down the various wizards, some wizened with age, as if this was a seriously dire threat. Suddenly a list of mystical items appeared in each wizard's hand, which read: the

lightning of a god, grain from the Dryads' fields, a dragon's fire, the legendary crux of archea, and the demon king's left foot.

The horribly avoidable, and barely notable, quest for sandwich!

With this, the witches and wizards of various ages, sizes, and races broke up into groups for the quest that was later to be known as, "The horribly avoidable, and barely notable, quest for sandwich." Drake, of all the people in the hall, had no idea what had happened, and was rather flustered after almost dying in the filing cabinet. As such, he opted to stick to Matthew like a leach desperate for blood, albeit slightly less bloodthirsty. "Uhh, so what's the quest for again?" Matthew turned to Drake, his mouth a grim set line chiseled in a face of stone. "The crux of sandwich has been broken." "Ah.. as self explanatory as that should most likely be, could you explain a bit more thoroughly for those who have not a clue what is going on?" Matthew looked surprised. "You mean you've never heard of the crux of sandwich?" "No." "Well, it is.. was, an ancient seal in Europe that kept the most horrible demons from the Demon Wars from escaping." Drake blanched as white as bleached snow. "So they're coming for us now?" His eyes expanded to as wide as saucers. "No, we still have some time before they become too active, but we'll be out on a quest to stop them soon. So pack your bags, and say bye to your mum, we're going on a quest!" Matthew marched off with a mischievous grin on his face, his vigor renewed, and suddenly Drake felt sorry for the sandwich demons, though he felt even sorrier for himself. He then sulked off to his room where he stuffed his meager belongings into a bag. These included a an extra set of clothes, a boot (to carry the demon king's foot in of course, who knows where it's been), and some (yet to be decided). Drake sighed and took a glance at the mirror. What stared back at him was not what you might attributed to a hero. In fact, it was rather plain, with pale skin, slight acne and a nose just a bit too thin for his face,

charcoal black hair, and dark blue eyes. Drake sighed again, reflecting that if his life was a train, then the bridge it was on had been subject to an airstrike and the train itself had spontaneously combusted. Drake threw on a leather chestplate with an iron plate on the left breast, and trudged out of his room in a slightly melancholy mood and was once again not surprised to see Matthew leaning on his doorframe. "Ready to go?" Matthew asked eagerly with slight impatience. Drake immediately greeted Matthew with a grin, shrugging off his worries and giving into Matthew's infectious cheeriness. "Never more!" Drake's positivity was quickly cut short by once again hitting the ground, this time not from taking a trip, but from a Dragon girl that was rather heavier than she looked running up behind him and bumping into him with considerable force. "Brooother! I'm reeaaaady" The girl grinned, her sharp fore fangs sparkling. Matthew rolled his eyes. "Ciara, you can't come, you're too young." Ciara quickly assumed a pouty expression, her lips pressing together and her cheeks puffing up. Drake would have most likely found it comical had he not been nursing a fresh bruise on his forehead. "But brooother, I'm sixty seven now, Which." she added slyly, "Is even older than you are." Matthew sighed. They had obviously had this conversation before. "You know dragons mature at a tenth the rate of a human. You're still seven in dragon years and therefore still nine years younger than I am, and nine years less mature." "I am so Madoo-er" She stuck out her tongue at Matthew. Matthew rolled his eyes, and turned towards Drake for support but found none as Drake was still dizzily rubbing his head and trying not to stumble into the walls that seemed to him to be spinning. "Fine, but Mom wouldn't like it." "YAY!" screamed Ciara. Drake looked around confused, not quite knowing what had transpired but tried for a weak grin. Matthew just shook his head.

The oracle. It's a helmet.

The trio then set off down the hallway and when they came to the doorway with the sign. Drake swallowed nervously. "Were not going down there are we?" "Read the sign." Matthew said as he entered with Ciara following close behind. Upon further inspection from the right angle, a small

subtitle read "Questers ignore above text". Drake then hurried to catch up with Matthew and Ciara, who had come to a door. Suddenly an unnatural shadow was cast over the trio and Drake scrambled backwards away from the apparition. The owner of a shadow was a tall being of darkness and cold, a form of major arctic shade, though Drake didn't know this. The shade opened a door and stepped to the side, staring passively at Drake. Drake didn't want to go into the room. Matthew dragged him in, despite this. When they entered Drake was shocked to be greeted by a bright room in sharp contrast with the dimly lit hallway, with rock music playing loudly. Strange things wandered the room, such as an actual jackelope, and a baby elephant that walked on the ceiling. Strangest of all however, was a silver helmet with a blue feather on top in the center of the room, sitting on a pedestal. Beneath it was a starbucks tee shirt, and to its sides were a boom box which was seemingly the source of the blaring rock music, and a half empty soda bottle. As if a shrine to a helmet wasn't odd enough, the helmet talked, and when it did, it was with a surfer's accent. "Yo Matthew, what's up dude?!" It yelled over the music. "Were going on a quest, we need your guidance oracle." Matthew stated in a serious voice. The music died down and a slurping sound came from the helmet. Some of the soda drained from the bottle. The helmet switched to a scottish accent. "So laddies, you're here for a quest eh? Well, I can tell you this much, it will be difficult." "Could you be a bit more specific?" Drake asked. The helmet turned towards him. "Yes." it monotoned in a deep resounding ancient voice. "You must start your quest in a pub." "Oh.." said Drake with a crestfallen expression. "Could you at least explain why you have that thing in the hallway?" The helmet somehow managed to radiate annoyance while simultaneously glaring loudly at the door. His voice turned to a rather normal American teenager's voice. "Oh ya, that stiff, always keeps people from visiting me. Merlin says it's for the general public's safety. Seems people don't generally respond well to an individual who can converse in color. Something about seizures. Gets rather boring in here all alone." the elephant let out a sympathetic trumpet. Drake raised an eyebrow to Matthew who shook his head as if to say "Don't ask". Matthew returned his

gaze to the helmet. "Thank you helmet, we are honored by your guidance." "Ya ya ya." the helmet muttered as it turned around towards a TV in the corner of the room which was currently playing nfl highlights. Matthew drug Ciara away from the jackelope which she had been petting for the duration of the conversation, and the trio exited the door, and all but Drake, who had resolved to not be surprised by anything, anymore, forever, were quite surprised indeed, to find themselves in the Irish countryside.

In Ireland and perhaps enjoying it a bit too much

After getting over their initial surprise at arriving in an Irish countryside, the members of our quest set out towards a town in the distance. Drake managed to keep his footing on the rolling hills, and followed Matthew to the edge of the town with Ciara following behind, absently chasing butterflies in the same general direction as Matthew was heading. The first thing that came to their attention as they entered the town, was the clamorous noise coming from a nearby building made to look old, with swinging doors that didn't touch the top or bottom of the door frame. Drake and Matthew glanced at each other, shrugged, and pushed their way in. Ciara got whacked with the doors before entering. Had they read the sign above the swinging doors they would have realized that the establishment into which they were walking was a pub, the Drunken Clover Pub specifically, and still would have probably entered. In any case, they quickly realized that they had indeed entered a pub, and while Drake turned around to exit, as he had no intention of getting drunk again, Matthew trudged farther inwards, pulling Drake along by the collar. They sat in the corner and Matthew ordered for them. Two beers and a cider. Drake assumed the cider was for Matthew's sister, though he soon found that it was not, as she downed her beer in one draught. He was, however, happy with the arrangement, as he was not getting drunk. At least he didn't think he was, though as was previously stated, they were in an Irish pub, and most every drink contained some form of alcohol. Near where they were sitting, another man was inconspicuously sipping his cider as well.

The man was wrinkled with age and missing one eye which was covered with a black leather patch strung around his head by a thin cord. His undamaged eye however, sparkled with mischief, youth, and mild to severe intoxication, contrary to his appearance. None of the tavern goers noticed this man, as magic often clouds the rather mundane, and quite frankly boring minds of average mortals. Matthew however did notice the man, being schooled in magic, and found there was something of an aura around the man, of mystery, and the unknown. There was also some trace of halitosis. Drake followed Matthew with his eyes, as Matthew rose from the table, and shuffled over to the man. As he plunked into a chair across from the man, he was greeted with a slight nod. "I see you seek knowledge?" Matthew hesitated for a moment. He was unsure of whether or not the man could be trusted, for as everyone knows, the magical world is full of individuals wearing eyepatches, not all of them wholesome or friendly. "Yes.." he finally breathed out, as he had forgotten to breath in his contemplation. "Aye, they all are aren't they?" "Who exactly are you-?" "All of them!" the man gestured expansively. "They're all after me scroll!" the man's voice had gained a heavier Irish accent as he talked. "Scheming and plotting... all of em.." the man muttered. "But you, you look honest. Yes.. a son of a dryad by the looks of it? You look just like your mother.. Not that I can remember her name of course, the last I saw of her was many years ago..." Matthew looked as if someone had punched him in the stomach and stolen his wallet. "Wait wha-" "But that is of no great importance" The man brushed away Matthew's inquisitions as one might an annoying fly, and straightened in his seat. "You are seeking knowledge, but knowledge must be earned, else it is worthless." Matthew sighed, he had heard this speech by many prophets and seers before, and asked, as the man droned on about the worth of knowledge like an endless infomercial. "I don't suppose we could just pay you?" By this time the slightly tipsy Drake and the seemingly unaffected Dragon Girl were standing on opposite sides of Matthew's chair. "Of course not, in any case, I propose a quest!" Drake seemed confused by this. "But we're already on a quest?" The Dragon Girl nodded vigorously in agreement. "A very important quest!" The man turned

to her, looked her over and seemed to reconsider, a grin growing on his face. "Well... there might be one thing I'd be willing to take instead.."

Matthews face grew ashen, a blade of green light filled his hand. While the other tavern goes were mostly blind to magic, they were all by descent, Irish, the first of the humans to discover the magical realm, thus their stories of leprechauns, who were actually a species of the Fae Folk, a species similar to pixies, sprites, and fairies, though there is a definite difference (see the magical compendium for more information). As soon as they saw the rather murderous looking Matthew, and the blade of green light in his hand, they all jumped to their feet in a yelling mass and ran from the tavern like they were heading to the end of a rainbow. This is perhaps, the only time in the history of Ireland, where an entire tavern has been emptied out with not one man left drunk and unconscious in his seat. The man in the chair paled slightly. Matthew continued to stare him down.

"Well.. perhaps a small quest.." He paused and hiccuped. "Something my son lost a few years ago.." Matthew didn't release the blade of light. "And that would be?" "Oh er, a hammer, *hic* lost in the swamp in the lowlands a few miles to the east." Drake narrowed his eyes skeptically. "A hammer. In a swamp." The man turned his gaze from the blade of light and glared at Drake. "Yes, are you deaf?" The man spat slightly as he talked, a fleck landed on Drake's face. Drake formed a rather negative opinion of the man, lightning crackling off of his now darkening skin. "No.." he said quietly, "I'm not." The man's eyes widened, he was quickly realizing what he was facing. Two magicians of great battle prowess has never been something to take lightly, for, though Drake did not know it, he had grown quite strong indeed during his training. There was also something familiar about the dark one.. A prophecy.. Ancient in nature. "Ah.. well, er, yes." the man stammered. "Just bring me the hammer and I'll tell you what you need to know." He grinned.It was fake. Drake hated that. For all his life Drake had been a no one, not impressive in looks, stature, or popularity. Drake hated people humoring him, he hated those false smiles on their faces. Now he could do something about it. Drake pinned the man to the wall by his neck, holding him there with one hand, knocking over a chair in the process. "If

there isn't a hammer, you'll regret it." Not exactly the most elegant of threats, though effective. Drake stormed out of the bar, quite literally, lightning burning lashes into the wood floor in his path. Matthew shook his head. "He's always leaned towards being dramatic, though he's not very good at it." Matthew extinguished his blade, and walked out of the tavern, the Dragon Girl skipping along behind him.

What are we doing in this swamp?

Drake led the way to the lowlands, stomping through the village, the crackling electricity around him slowly dissipating. In the end he was left smelling slightly of smoke and ozone, and with his hair sticking out at odd angles. Eventually the village gave way to a forest, which slowly listed down to a swampy mire, where few trees grew. Drake shivered, it was getting rather late and the air had gained a biting chill. "Why couldn't I have heat powers or something..." Matthew began squelching along through the muck, his feet producing sounds flatulence in the mud, "Well, first of all, very few wizards learn heat, fire is much easier, and secondly, your lightning does produce heat if you want it to. However you wouldn't feel it as a caster is immune to the effects of his own spells in most circumstances." "Oh." Drake trudged along unhappily through the icy goo. "How exactly will we find the hammer?" "It'll be wherever the center of the swamp is." "Why?" "Because where else would it be? Magical items always appear in central locations." The trudged on in silence. Drake was shivering horribly, his breath laced with icy crystals that crackled slightly with electricity. He turned towards Ciara and noticed she didn't appear to be suffering in the least, splashing through the swamp as a child might a mud puddle. "How can you stand the cold?" Ciara turned towards him, smiling. "Ima dragon silly, we have fire in our chest, see?" It was then that Drake experienced the tightest and possibly the most intimate hug of his life (barring his first dinner at Aloria as there is no evidence that anything at all happened that night), his face and torso pressed to the dragon girl's chest. For the rest of the trip he found himself rather warm, though he didn't really

know whether it was from the fire or the image burned into his head. In any case, they finally reached the center of the swamp. There was indeed a hammer, centered in a clearing and planted upon a pyre of mossy stone, but unfortunately there was also a Sphinx between the party and the hammer. Matthew looked stumped. "Well, I was expecting a guardian, though this is not quite what I had in mind..." "Welcome, mortals, welcome dark one" the sphinx drolled in an amused purr, the sound not quite matching her human face. Matthew muttered "A sphinx... why would a sphinx be here of all places.." then louder he stated "Ah, yes, well hello great sphinx, we are all so greatly honored to meet you in your, er splendor." Matthew bowed, elbowing Drake in the stomach to do so as well. "Might I just ask, why you're not in Egypt?" the sphinx rolled its eyes "Ohhhh that dusty old place. Have you ever spent a hundred years without having any winter at all, no, not even a single drop of rain or daffodil in spring?" "Well I-" "Of course not! Who would want to be subject to such torture?" The sphinx shivered. Drake was shivering as well, though more from hypothermia than anything else. "So, I left that sand pit and came up here, found a nice magical artifact to guard, and even got cheaper insurance!" The sphinx grinned smugly. "So... If we could get a riddle?" "Ah yes, that... I quit doing that when I left egypt." "Oh so we can just take it?" The sphinx hacked out a laugh, or perhaps it was a furball. "No of course not, it shall be trial by combat." Fangs bared and claws extended the Sphinx lunged. Matthew sighed "I quite liked the riddles actually, I found them rather more challenging than such droll matches to the death." Challenging or not, the sphinx did not stop in mid air to converse with Matthew, though Drake, robed in lightning, stepped in its way just in time, flinging his arms at its face, and catching its ribs with a powerful right elbow that sent it crashing to the side. The sphinx slowly got up, snarling, favoring its right side as it circled. Unfortunately for the sphinx, it failed to notice that as it circled, it rotated in such a way that Drake was now closer to the hammer than the sphinx. Drake smirked and took a step back, reaching for the hammer, missing it, and then turning around momentarily to grab it. During this turn he lost sight of the sphinx, and this is the time it chose to

attack. Ciara, who had been busy conversing with a frog finally noticed the sphinx. "KITTY" Now, despite her childlike demeanor, Ciara could be rather intimidating, and the moment the sphinx heard her voice, it attempted to stop itself and run away, perhaps back to Egypt. Alas, it reacted a moment too late and was tackled into the marsh by the world's most overbearing cat enthusiast. Drake's hand made contact with the hammer and a shockwave echoed out from the center of clearing, blowing back Drake's hair and tearing at the surrounding vegetation. Suddenly the hammer changed into a pair of black, metal gauntlets on Drake's hands, streaming blue and white electricity. Drake clenched his fists and grinned. "Level up," he muttered. The sphinx bolted out from the forest, pursued by Ciara, claws stretched out and fanged human maw spread wide. Time seemed to slow. Drake bent over to his left, putting his right hand under his torso. Time began again and Drake threw a powerful upwards backhand, clashing with the sphinx's skull with a sound like the crash of thunder. The sphinx tumbled to a tangled halt, minus its head, bleeding sand from its neck until all that was left was a massive golden pelt and a pile of yellow sand. Ciara looked on the verge of tears, kneeling at the side of the deceased "kitty" as Matthew and Drake marched away from the clearing in high spirits, congratulating each other on how utterly awesome they were.

The hammer is a pair of gloves and the one eyed dude isn't pleased

Drake and Matthew re-entered the town, causing many of the inhabitants to rush back into the houses from which they were beginning to hesitantly emerge. They arrive at the front door of the tavern, not a soul in sight, a single torch burning inside the establishment, only partially illuminating the man with the eyepatch slouched in a chair in the corner, snoring softly. Drake and Matthew approach the man, Drake attempting to remove the gauntlets from his hands with gratuitous cursing. The man stirred awake, narrowing his eyes shrewdly, and glancing between Matthew and Drake. "Did you bring me my hammer?" "Errr yes, just help me pry it off my hands and we'll be on our way." The old man stiffened. "Those gloves... are the

hammer?" "Ye-", "No, no, no! This was not supposed to happen so soon, don't bother trying to take them off lad, they may only be taken by force, not given by free will." Matthew cleared his throat. "What wasn't supposed to happen so soon?" "The prophecy!" "Sir.. if you would elaborate? There are many prophecies on hold currently." The eyepatched man turned quickly to Matthew, his forehead creased and his eye alight. "THE prophecy, the one which I have harbored for centuries, hoping against hope that it would not come to pass." The man's eyepatch suddenly fell away, a bright light shining from the empty socket, and a raven cawed from the roof. "The dark ones heir, with fists like thunder, shall breath the earth to light, he finds help in the heavens, aided by lightning god's might, he calls the ancients to action, for now is the time to strike" Matthew grabbed a beer stained napkin and quickly jotted down the prophecy, as the man slumped in his seat, and a raven alighted on his shoulder, cocking its head at Drake before releasing a piercing caw. Suddenly, at the sound of the raven's cry, the man's body exploded into a flock of black birds, flapping past Drake, Matthew and Ciara before bursting out of the bar and dispersing into the night, leaving behind a trail of droppings upon the roofs of buildings and Drake's new, no longer shiny gloves.

So, uh what now?

Drake was drawing a blank. For the first time in his quest he had exactly zero idea what to do or where to go. How to start? In an Irish pub. How to get there? Plot convenience magic! Now he was confronted with a much more complex challenge, and a prophecy more cryptic than a fortune cookie. Matthew folded his napkin prophecy of doom and put it in his pocket. And that is when it struck him. A bolt of lightning that is. Suddenly Drake, Matthew, and Ciara found themselves in a stone, Nordic throne room, facing a yellow haired man with a scruffy beard and a lopsided grin. He was clad in a metal skirt accented with red fabric, and a blue chainmail chestpiece with plates of stone on each chest and metal shoulder guards

on each shoulder. Attached to each shoulder guard was a dark blue cape that seemed to blow around with a non-existent wind. "Welcome to Asgard!" Bellowed the man, spreading his hands expansively, waving around a pig shank. Matthew instantly sank to one knee. Ciara oohed and aahed at the grand stone palace, held aloft by soaring wooden poles thicker than any tree could possibly grow, and alit by flickering torches and a roaring fire. Drake stayed standing, wearing a dubious mask. He didn't trust the man's beard. He also halfway expected a fight, no matter how friendly the man might appear. Despite his suspicions he couldn't help but let a grin creep to the corners of his mouth, the man's joviality was infectious. The man leapt from his throne, landing in front of the kneeling Matthew. "Rise, rise, brave druid, we have no use for such formalities in the hall of Thor!" Matthew hesitantly began to rise, though was quickly aided by the man energetically yanking him to his feet. Drake unsuccessfully stifled a slight snicker. The man, who was assumedly Thor, whirled upon him, a darker expression like a looming thundercloud washing over his countenance. "And what might I ask is funny of a brave warrior standing in the house of Thor? He has earned this privilege, do you think not?" Drake recoiled and stuttered out something to the extent of, "Er um, no I didn't mean to imply that um" A savage, not completely sane gleam glowed hot in Thor's eyes. "If you would challenge him then a duel is in order!" Suddenly they were no longer standing in a hall, they were in a circular, flat building with a dirt floor. Thor was sitting in an elevated throne placed in a gallery. A circle of chalk drew its way around the edges of the arena. "Now fight, for no particular reason other than my viewing pleasure," Thor rumbled. Matthew sprinted forwards, two sharp branches jutting from his shirt sleeves like punch daggers, aimed at Drake's throat. Drake sidestepped, his innate senses already kicking in, his skin darkening to a smoky gray, and his eyes deepening a shade of blue. Matthew stumbled past Drake and took a spinning kick to the back of the head, falling to the ground. "Impressive sir elf! Perhaps I was quick to judge your confidence as arrogance, or perhaps your blood shall yet wet the ground, aha!" Thor shouted from his seat. Matthew stood to his feet, grinning. "Eh, I've seen

worse, though your form needs work.” Drake smirked back. “Thanks, leafy.” Matthews eyes began to glow green and suddenly the earth ripped open, an undulating mass of roots sprouting forth and lashing out at Drake. Left, right, up down, always forwards. This was all Drake knew as his vision was embraced by green and brown, a wave of trees between him and Matthew. Suddenly, he broke through, reaching the Druid. Matthews fists glowed green and Drake’s sparked with lightning, a canopy of leaves shrouding them from the light. They faced each other down in the semi darkness. Drake lunged, swinging wildly at Matthews head. Matthew caught the punch, twisted Drake’s hand, and threw a savage uppercut into his stomach. Drake stumbled back, spitting a spray of blood from his mouth like they do in those japanese animes. He raised his hands to beside his head, he knew to be careful now. Suddenly, Matthew struck, a backfist thrown to Drake’s temple. Drake covered up and caught Matthew’s arm in his armpit, bringing it down onto his knee with a snap like a falling tree. Matthew’s eyes began to glow brighter, but before the mage could utter a word, Drake silenced him with a crushing elbow to the sternum, and a headbut straight to the face, each laced with the electricity coursing through Drake’s blood. Matthew fell to the ground like a wet sack of sand, broken and beaten. Suddenly they were back in the hall of Thor, Matthew standing on his feet, quite alive, Thor himself grinning from his throne. “Hmm, you’re strong, I like that. True warriors both of you, I guarantee access to Valhalla when you die, despite my father’s slight perturbation with your recent actions.” “Errr um thanks.” Drake didn’t know how to pronounce Valhalla, much less know what it was. “He sent you on a quest for my hammer did he not?” Thor raised an eyebrow. Matthew nodded. “Well then, hand it over, we haven’t all day.” Drake raised his gauntlets. “Its stuck.” Thor frowned, “You mean to say that my hammer, is on your hand.” “Yep.” “I’m going to have to kill you then.” “Wait wha?!” Thor leapt from his seat and threw a punch at Drake with considerable force, though was surprised to have his fist met with another, lightning crackling out from the point of impact. Thor threw another punch and a legendary trade of blows ensued, neither giving ground, each meeting the other’s punches with their own.

You see, a god's weapon is a part of them, when separated, neither is nearly as strong as half of their power when they are whole. Added to this that they are the focal point of a god's being, Thor was not quite in top condition. Only a small portion of his power being represented. Drake didn't know this though, and was feeling quite pleased with himself. Finally, both fell to their knees, exhausted, a god's strength matched against his own weapon. Thor spoke. "No mortal has ever matched me in battle... though I concede you are indeed my equal, at least in this state..." Drake nodded, panting. "Thanks.." "Let us end this. Go with my blessing, and know that the might of Thor shall be with you, though in time I shall have my hammer back." A strike of lightning and Drake, Matthew, and Ciara find themselves back in the pub, smelling slightly of ozone. Matthew sighed, mingling with gods had never been his favorite activity, much too stressful.

We really need a better wall.

Matthew tapped a table and iridescent green lines began to trace themselves on the hardwood surface. "So, we are here," Matthew tapped on a line and a dot appeared. Matthew moved his hand upwards and suddenly the lines lept from the table, and became a 3D almost phallic object, turning and shifting like fine sand in the wind. "And here is where we need to be." Matthew stuck his hand into the whirling mass and pulled out a sphere of green light. Slowly the sphere began to display images of endless fields of grain and luscious forests stretching out as far as the eye could see. Matthew closed his hand and the images disappeared in a shower of sparks. "So, how do we get there?" Drake asked. "We visit the ents of course."

An excerpt from the Magical Compendium

The Ents, also known as the wooden folk, are a race of beings as old as the most ancient of trees. They are a race adverse to movement and any form of physical exertion, and have thus been assumed inanimate by most

mortals. Only a druid of relation to a dryad may call forth the ents from their slumber, for they are all descendants of the first and only male wood nymph, and Gaea, the goddess of the earth. While slow to action the ents have a propensity for a short temper, and can be easily perturbed in their awoken, if usually drowsy state.

After passing out on a bench, and eating a breakfast provided by the tavern owner, who actually happened to believe in magic and irish fairies (go figure). Matthew and Drake began to set out for the nearest forest. Upon exiting the tavern, Matthew turned to Drake and asked, "Hey, have you seen Ciara?" Drake shook his head, "Nope." They both re-entered the bar and searched for any sign of Ciara, only finding a note that read, "You two are both so mean, boo hoo hoo, you killed the kitty, I'm going scavenger hunting on my own." It was signed with Ciara's name and what was presumably a quickly scrawled frowny face. Matthew placed the note down and began frantically pacing and waving his hands around in the air. "Ahhh no, no, no, no, no. I knew something like this would happen!" Drake munched on a bag of chipsticks. "She's a dragon right, can't she just handle herself?" Matthew turned towards him. "Oh, she's more than capable of keeping safe, though I worry for anyone near her." On that cheery note, Drake and Matthew walked out of the pub, Matthew considerably more stressed than before, and Drake partially hung over. Using a local guide map that they received from the pub owner, they navigated to the nearest forest, in the opposite direction from the town as the swamp. On arrival, Matthew bent his head and mumbled a few words, perhaps pausing to worship the sun, before tapping the first tree of the forest twice. "Permission to enter." the tree's branches rustled and the forest seemed to peel back before them. They entered the forest, and the trees closed behind them. Bumbling through the dark, the two mages tripped and stumbled over roots, and smacked into branches, before Matthew found what he was looking for: a huge, ancient oak tree. Right as Matthew was about to tap the tree, a wizened man slightly resembling Donald Trump emerged, with a toupee of green moss slapped across his

head. "Who awakes me from my slumber? I'm waiting for my investments to pay off." the ent complained. "We seek entrance to the Dryad's lands." "Hrmm... Perhaps you, but not the dark one, immigration laws are loose enough as it is, too many mortals in the drayds' fields." Drake stepped up beside Matthew. "Well technically I'm part elf or something apparently so doesn't that link me to the nature spirits somehow maybe?" The ent scrunched up his face and began to think. Matthew shot Drake a thumbs up. Drake sighed in relief. He had no idea who he was and wasn't related to but it hadn't seemed too much of a stretch. "Distant, but yes, though we really need a better wall between the worlds to keep down illegal immigrants.. Hrmm..." "Alright so if you'll just send me and Matthew on our way.." Suddenly the ent's eyes widened, focusing in on Drake's twin gauntlets. As it recoiled in disgust, its moss toupee nearly fell from its head. "Attempting to smuggle weapons! A federal crime! You want a pass? Well I got a pass for ya, straight to the underworld!" Suddenly the foliage beneath Drake and Matthew's feet fell away and they plunged into darkness, the ent above them returning to his sleep, mumbling about a small loan of some sort.

Help I've fallen and I don't know how to get up!

This, was not planned. So far their journey had gone completely as planned. Drake was rather stiff from sleeping in the pub, but otherwise, he had been enjoying the journey despite dancing the tango with death on occasion. Now, he was falling down an infinite tube of darkness, wondering if he was falling through the center of the earth, and just reversing his momentum when gravity changed on the other side, and if he would be stuck in the tube forever. He was also trying to get the image of the ent out of his head, as Donald trump's arboreal look alike was not what he wanted to have as his dying thought. Fortunately for Drake, after hours of biting wind and claustrophobia inducing darkness, he landed on a pile of red sand, with much less impact than he should have. He looked around and saw Matthew laying beside him, shivering despite the intense heat radiating

from the ground. Above him there seemed to be no ceiling, only blood red clouds highlighted by burning crimson fires and strikes of dark lightning that seemed to etch lines through the light as rips in existence. A small smiley face burned itself into existence in front of him, with a subtitle, "Welcome to hell," before slowly fizzling out in a trickle of sparks. It was cold, despite the uncomfortably warm ground. Drake shuddered and slid to a sitting position, wincing from friction between his hands and the sand, which felt as if each individual grain had been sharpened. Matthew groaned and awoke. He glanced around, eyes slitted sleepily. "We're in Hell aren't we." "Seems like it." Drake nodded. Matthew sighed. "Well, I suppose we needed to get here anyways, time to go shopping for a foot." Both crawled to their feet, wincing as they did so, and started out across the hell that is, well, Hell. They spoke minimally, as their tongues slowly dried to the consistency of cotton. Each felt as if they had a blowfish slowly expanding in their mouth. Little changed as they walked, there were no real waypoints. Occasionally they crossed wispy dried out husks of humanoid figure that seemed to drift across the sand. Each time the ethereal wisp would cry out for water and walk right through them as if they weren't there. One was wearing a party hat. In any case, Drake realized that Hell wasn't an intimidating, scary place, it was a slow nightmare, an endless torture with no end. Drake shook his head, whatever these people had done to get here, he didn't want to do the same. Eventually the monotony broke up. Something... blockish fell from the sky and landed with a resounding ploof on the ground. It was a toaster. A very very large toaster, a good head and shoulders taller than Drake. Suddenly, the toaster opened its eye. In the very center of the side facing Drake and Matthew was a huge, perfectly circular, bloodshot eye. They stared. The eye stared back. They began to walk around the toaster and the eye followed them, rotating around the surface of the toaster with no fixed position. Matthew turned to Drake and uttered the first words of the trip. "We're getting closer." Drake nodded but didn't speak in response. He was still rather traumatized by the toaster. Strange things began repeatedly falling from the sky, threatening, but not overly dangerous. Finally, a glass eye the size of a beach ball with wings swooped down from the sky. Drake

almost laughed despite his parched throat, its ungainly flight was nearly comedic. Then the eye formed a seam in the middle and opened up to reveal a gaping maw full of razor sharp jagged teeth. Drake screamed like a girl. Matthew and Drake leapt to the side before the eye could take a chunk out of either of them. The eye swept down at Matthew, though was intercepted by Drake's fist to its mouth. This however did not discourage it in the least and it began shredding the skin on Drake's arm, which was somehow pushed through the terror's mouth farther than should have been possible considering the outward size of the eye. Matthew feebly pulled at the eye, attempting to pry it from Drake's arm, but barely distracted it in his weakened state. Nature magicians, commonly known as druids, are drained by extremely hot or cold places, and Hell was most definitely both. The eye had made one fatal mistake though; it had only one mouth and Drake had two fists. It realized this only when it was shattered from the side by a crushing blow from Drake's free hand. In the place where the eye had been, Drake's arm reappeared, lacerated and ripped, but overall intact, the gauntlet having spared most of his forearm. Drake fell to his knees, sinking to the stinging sand, cradling his bloody arm, panting heavily and staring blankly at the ground. He hadn't expected to duel flying eyeball today. The red sandy terrain eventually gave way to a pebbly obsidian beach pockmarked by sinkholes of lava that reeked of sulfur. The waves of monsters slowly increased, until Drake was fending off various kitchen appliances and furniture monstrosities constantly, dodging spits of lava from nearby pools. Finally they saw their first landmark, a bedraggled gate of imposing ancient obsidian, black iron bar grates mangled and sagging in their hinges. The gate stretched seemingly infinitely in either direction. Matthew sighed. "The gates of hell, not much further now, though here's where the real fight begins." They walked through the gates. Suddenly their vision went black as if a blanket had been thrown over their head except for three pairs of slitted red eyes and three sets of barred white teeth. Matthew stared calmly, Drake took a step back, tense, teeth gritted in anxiety. "Cerberus the shadow dog." Matthew said. Drake grinned, walked up to the growling beast, made of rippling shadow, barely contained within its

physical form, and patted it on the head. The Cerberus, all three head suddenly very intent and very confused, no traveler had dared to pet it, found itself quite surprised, going cross eyed staring at Drake, who kept on grinning, rubbing the dog's snout. Cerberus liked that. He rolled over and Drake pet his tummy. This went on for about five minutes before Cerberus fell asleep, snuffling contentedly. Matthew and Drake proceeded to skirt the sleeping beast, walking on the very tips of their toes. As they continued through the blackened wasteland, they came to a dark flagstone highway. Drake noticed that there seemed to be etchings upon each stone. Expecting to meet with some horrendous prophecy of doom and defeat, Drake was faced with, "You suck." Upon further inspection, each stone was inscribed with some form of insult such as "Your mother is a hamster", and it became a pastime between Drake and Matthew to see who could find the most absurd of the insults. The winner was Matthew, having read the legendary phrase, "You look like a lunchable," from the final stone on the road. After recovering from a fit of incessant giggles, Drake and Matthew turned their faces upwards from the road to view a rather imposing structure, a brick castle of soaring towers and wide battlements, hued like it had been soaked with dried blood. With every other second the structure seemed to pulse like a beating heart as if it had a will and a life of its own. The portcullis was hewn of some form of ivory, and pulled up on its own with no sound of clanking gears or chains to be heard. Matthew and Drake walked through the gate, their footsteps a clanging disruption to the cacophony of silence. As they entered the castle the ground became soft under their feet like a wet sponge, and with each step blood spurted up, causing both to cringe in disgust. As they journeyed deeper into the fortress, their way lighted by torches burning black, they became more and more aware of the throbbing of the walls. The castle was alive and it was not benevolent. It was a force from the time before man, a structure of imposing might built from the corpses of creatures long dead, brooding in hateful existence for eternity. It also happened to smell of rotten fish and thor's armpits which was rather unpleasant. Drake had assumed the king of the underworld would have better taste. Suddenly they came to a halt,

faced with a wall made up of a pinkish mucus membrane. A deep rumbling voice echoed out from the room. "Enter." It resonated. "Ew" Drake said, and hesitantly forced his way through the snotty barrier, followed by a cringing Matthew. The room was made of solid red brick, less alive appearing than the rest of the castle, as if it'd been built in as an afterthought by some morbid architect. Giant stalactites of obsidian dripped from the ceiling. One had gnarls that vaguely resembled Hitler's face. In the center of the room, there was a black and red marble throne. Upon the throne sat a man who appeared as a cross between a drug dealer and an eighties hipster. He wore an open black leather vest patched with denim, and ripped up dark jeans, along with a large gold cult sign hanging from his neck. On his head was a black hat that said "Satan=3." His eyes were mostly covered by a pair of those cheap sunglasses with plastic grates. "Yo what's up homies?" Said the tan guy on the throne. Matthew glanced at Drake and shrugged. "Uhh we're trying to get to the dryads fields?" muttered Drake. "Oh yaaaaaa, bit out of your way aren't ya?" The man on the throne held up a hand with one finger up like he'd just remembered something. "You two are the ones who just took a whirl up to ole Zeus' flat." His disposition turned sour for a moment at the mention of Zeus. "But I can't really blame you for your company, not like you can really refuse his kind of invitations." He flashed his bleach white teeth, spreading his excessively ring adorned hands. Matthew nodded quickly. "Right, er, of course not, though um lord Hades, what might we do for you today?" Matthew was wringing his hands nervously. Personally Drake didn't feel that scared of the man, though his presence did set him on edge a bit, a nagging, itching fear that he didn't think he should be feeling. The man on the throne straightened up. "Ah, just a tiny favor." He took off his sunglasses, revealing pure black eyes. No, that wasn't right, the space where his eyes should have been was a void, an empty infinity. Like an empty jar of cookies. Drake shuddered. "I need you to do me a solid and beat down a rebel in my camp, some low life on a high horse. You prolly know him as the demon king." Hades grinned. "But I'm the only king around here." Matthew nodded vigorously. Drake frowned. "And why would we go out of our way to help you?" If Matthew's jaw could

have physically fallen to the floor, it would indeed have. Hades grinned. "Fair enough, fair enough, I like a little spunk," he frowned slightly, "Though when talking to a god you should show a little more respect." Drake nodded. "Fine, *sir*, what's in it for us?" Hades barked out a laugh. "You scratch my back and I'll scratch yours, do this for me and I'll do ya a solid later, until then, vamoose!" Drake and Matthew's vision faded to black as they slid from consciousness, their last sight Hades grinning down from his throne.

3 Steps to successful life in the underworld!

Drake and Matthew came to in what seemed to be a massive structure built like a McDonalds kids playground with a cheesy brochure in front of them blaring the statement, "3 Steps to successful life in the underworld," in big cheery lettering. Drake sighed and attempted to stand up, bumping his head on the roof of the playground before sliding back down to his butt. Matthew glanced around and sighed. "When we first set out I didn't think we'd seriously get in a fix like this." Drake grinned furtively "Ya, all unicorns and butterflies and fighting trolls under bridges." Matthew laughed. "I wish, but we've barely eaten at all for over a day." At this the companions' stomachs rumbled in two part harmony. Wearily they scrabbled up into a hunching stoop and began their journey through the maze. Skirting puddles of what appeared to be human vomit. The McDonalds maze was accurate to the point. Eventually they emerged into a cave hewn out of the red rock, the ceiling slightly above their heads. There was a fire burning in the middle. A slight woman sat, legs pulled close, poking the fire with a stick. She wore a red, soot stained cloak that obscured her entire body. Matthew approached her first, "Ma'am?" She shifted slightly. Her head turned up slightly so that they could see her chin. The hood fell back to reveal her eyes and suddenly all was black.

Magic, what it is and how the **** it works.

When Drake awoke, he smelled a sweet scent of ginger. He thought of christmas, and fire places. There was one crackling merrily beneath the hearth. He rubbed his eyes and sat up. Alas, there was no tree. Only stone walls lined with odd implements, with the bed he was resting upon shoved into the corner, as if it was unimportant. He sat up, narrowly avoiding a small explosion on his left, the source of which was a floating orange and black orb of light and energy with a solid white core that fluctuated and undulated as if being pulled at like the strings of a harp by an invisible hand. Drake looked at the orb, shook his head firmly and got out of the bed. They had come to an understanding. Despite the orb's obvious non sentience, it radiated an aura of warmth with danger laced in its undercurrents. Drake had simply reached out with his own, lightningy, for he had no other word to describe it, aura, and asked it not to explode again. The sphere had responded that he smelled like a tuna fish through a series of complex auric codes, so he assumed that was a yes. There was a single exit to the room, a yawning doorframe inhabited by no door. Drake momentarily wondered if it had been stolen. He got up from the bed, skirting the orb, and walked to the door carefully, taking a meandering path so as not to damage any of the magic equipment scattered around his feet. He emerged into a large circular room with a round table in the middle, with curved couches as chairs. The walls of the room were entirely lined with columns upon columns of books, looking as if they should at any moment snap their straining shelves to bury the casual peruser Perhaps however, the books were light, Drake thought, as many were flapping around on tiny wings through the air, soaring and dipping and diving like real birds would. Drake suddenly wondered if there was a word for a flock of books as he approached the couch, and the two people sitting upon it. Matthew turned around and motioned for Drake to sit down. He nodded in response and took a seat beside Matthew. The third individual at the table turned towards him. It was the lady in the cowl. For a moment she was

ancient beyond belief, then she was barely legal. Her ages seemed to shift and flow for a few moments before finally settling to something around thirty. "Welcome," she said. Her voice wasn't rasping, as Drake had halfway expected. It was completely normal, unlike their surroundings. "Would you like a drink?" Drake nodded. A book flew down from the sky with a deep red juice. Pomegranate maybe. Matthew sighed and bitch slapped the book. It went flying across the room, turned green and grew a tree from its pages. "HEY!" exclaimed a mildly perturbed Drake. Some of the juice had spilled upon his crotch. The books seemed to snicker. Enchanted items. Can't live with'em, can't live without 'em. Matthew rolled his eyes and tilted his head, raising his eyebrows, "Oh, I'm quite sorry, should I have let you enjoy your drink. And *never* get out of here." Drake stared quizzically for a moment. The middle aged woman laughed. Then it dawned on him. A story he had read somewhere, probably in Percy Jackson (where else does anyone learn greek mythology?), that said once you ate something in the underworld, you could never leave. Drake blanched white. He had been that close to drinking the juice. The woman laughed. "Ah, you can't blame an old hag for trying, it does get lonely down here you know, and I could use a strong young man." She batted her eyelashes. Drake scooted farther away down the couch. She frowned for a moment and let out an exasperated breath. "Boys these days, can't appreciate an experienced woman, butttt," She smiled at Drake. "Your good friend Matthew said you might be staying here a while." Drake wanted to whimper and curl into the fetal position but even he could see the slew of jokes that could be made at his expense in such a scenario. "Why?" Drake queried, looking towards Matthew. Matthew snapped his fingers and a poof of green energy appeared in the air around his hand. "Magic." The witch nodded. "Yes, poor Matthew here has said your magic is subpar little one, and being quite honest, so is his," the witch giggled. Drake had expected a cackle and perhaps a magic broom, but this was quite unnerving enough. But wait, hadn't Matthew seemed fairly powerful? He'd restrained the mages of aloria, killed him numerous times, and bitch slapped a book. Matthew looked down at his feet as if they had suddenly grown a new

fascinating fungus. "Oh, he's strong for *Aloria*, alright, but anywhere else?" She fell into a fit of giggles. "What do you mean anywhere else?" Drake asked. He'd assumed Aloria was the only magical undergroundish city. The woman looked aghast. "You mean you haven't been anywhere besides aloria." She feigned a faint with her hand to her forehead. "Oh what a tryst! Matthew how could you be so cruel?" Matthew shrugged. "With all the questing and impending death we haven't gotten to do much sightseeing." A book flew by and clipped Matthew's head. He continued, flicking his hand at the book which quickly flew away before it could find its zen and become one with nature. "The other cities haven't been along the way." The woman shook her head. "5 ancient schools of magic, five major cities." "Schools?" The woman rolled her eyes. "Yes, good and evil, order and chaos, and balance." The woman threw five dice on the table, each landing with a different number between one and five facing up. The cube with the number one unfolded and projected an image of a huge marble colosseum upon a floating island made of terraced rocks. People in white and earth toned robes meandered about, casting spells and bartering at market stalls placed parallel to the paths along the terraces. A large dragon with white and gold scales flew through the sky and dove into the colosseum, its wings barely stretching half the radius of the structure. The first cube's projection faded away and the unfolded cube sank into the table. The next cube opened to reveal Aloria. The witch muttered "Aloria, the bastion of order." she nearly sounded sarcastic. The next cube opened to reveal a huge dark, blockish, castle seemingly seated upon a thundercloud. Lightning flashed and ethereal wraiths of gruesome appearance shrieked through the sky. Mages fought in arenas crudely built upon crags of rock. A large granite island loomed in the distance that appeared to be flipping everyone off. "Aloria's opposite, Malzaroth," breathed Matthew. Drake shuddered, this time not from hypothermia. The fourth cube opened to display a fiery fortress surrounded by a lake of lava with cute little lava fish jumping around. The hulking structure's base was supported by stone similar to what made up Hades' castle, with a giant skull carved into the front. On either side of the gate towers soared and ended in sharp

threatening points. “Varex” The witch whispered forebodingly. The final cube opened to reveal a meadow with small cottages built throughout. People walked about, talking, and practicing magic peacefully. No need to fight no need to do good or evil, in perfect balance. Matthew rolled his eyes. “BOOOOORRRRRRINNNNNNGGGGGG” The final projection faded away with a sound like a deflating balloon. The witch nodded. “Indeed, no real purpose to balance if you ask me. It’s been aaagggeeeesss since they’ve done anything even marginally useful. Not that Aloria’s done anything recently either.” she added on slyly. Matthew rolled his eyes. “Malzaroth hasn’t done jack since before the internet. They’re probably just sitting around posting memes or something at this point.” The witch rolled her shoulders and shrugged. “Perhaps, but they’ve grown stronger recently. You’ll need training.” She turned to Drake. “Especially this one. Can’t have an inexperienced young elf running rampant with the god’s lightning now can we?” She shook her head and tsked. “What kind of training?” Drake asked suspiciously, having no intention of dying repeatedly once again. The witch licked her lips. “Well first you’ll come to my bedroo-. Matthew slapped a hand over her mouth and raised an eyebrow. The witch daintily pinched his hand and pulled it from her mouth, smiling. “Ohhh Matthew I didn’t know you were into that kind of thing.” She attempted to snuggle up to him but was met with a solid green wall of force between her and the stoic Matthew. She harrumphed and turned back to Drake. “Well, you see, you’re going to have to learn how to control those mittens you’ve got there. First of all, pick up this cup of tea.” Drake did so, though the porcelain handle disintegrated into shards moments after he grabbed it. “Again.” Hours and what must’ve been half of China’s drinking cups later, Drake finally picked up the cup without decimating it. By this time Matthew was passed out on the couch and the witch was nearly asleep. The witch nodded blearily, letting out a yawn. “And now the training begins.” She waved her hand and suddenly the library was gone, replaced with a scene out of a giant fun house gone wrong. Huge cubes of brightly colored material like hard plastic made up much of the ground. Random shapes of different colors floated through the air. Doors led off of apparent cliffs and

staircases spiraled up to who knows where. Gravity seemed to have no meaning, as the witch stood on a wall perpendicular to the block on which Drake was standing. "The non zone." Uttered the witch. "Where we shove all promising magi till they can figure out how to train without sinking small islands." She smiled sweetly. Matthew was standing beside Drake, no longer asleep, looking as if he was suffering a sudden bout PTSD. The witch waved her hand and suddenly one of the shapes slammed into the ground and turned into a cupcake with cakey arms and legs, fondue googly eyes, and a not so pastry meat cleaver. It wore an apron that said "Kiss the kook". Matthew screamed like a little girl and began to run up a wall, leaving Drake to fend for himself. "NOT AGAIN" Matthew could be heard to be yelling in the distance. Drake stared into the eyes of the monstrosity, took a step forwards, and then quickly joined Matthew, running towards the vertical wall, jumping towards it, and feeling the gravity shift so that his feet were pulled to what was originally perpendicular to where he had been standing. He shook his head, fighting off the vertigo from the disorienting experience, and looked up, where the cupcake was still running towards him. Drake bent his knees and lunged upwards, his stomach feeling as if it was about to drop out of his rib cage as gravity shifted once again, the clang of his gauntleted fist against the cupcake's meat cleaver jerking him back to reality. The cupcake flicked its blade to the side, sending Drake flying off in a spinning bunch. He landed on a pink pad of similar consistency to jello but with the bounciness of a trampoline, sending him once again flying until the air, only to be bounced up and down again repeatedly until finally settling upon the elastic substance. Barely had he crawled to his knees before the monster lunged at him again, its blade slicing towards his neck. The moment seemed to be an infinity. The life flashing before your eyes gimmick had always seemed unlikely to Drake at the best and at worst some fever dream trope formulated in the head of a hollywood director. But it was all there. The orphanage, school, hanging out with Matthew and his entrance to this strange world all wrapped up with a tight little bow that he knew meant the end. Then suddenly a large oak tree fell from the sky in a timely manner, crushing the carbohydrate rich

monstrosity beneath its branches. Standing on the trunk, covered in leaves, eyes stretched wide with fear and anxiety was a very disturbed looking Matthew who seemed as if he was reliving 'nam. Sliding down the tree, Matthew helped Drake to his feet, wobbling slightly upon the elastic cherry flavored trampoline. The witch cackled from her seat upon a floating purple block, eyes alight with glee. "Having fun Matthew? This just reminds me of your training days, you were so cute back then.. Ohh I could've just pinched your cute little cheeks" Matthew turned up towards her with a strained glower. "Can we just leave? He has combat training, the last thing we need is him blowing up half the non zone." Matthew glanced back over to Drake, whose skin was beginning to darken, electricity sparking erratically across his body. "Oh I think not" The witch exclaimed eagerly, "His potential is just beginning to sho-" The witch was suddenly cut off. Not by a stutter or interruption, but by an explosion akin to what a nuclear explosion might look like if the mushroom cloud was made of blue lightning. Ropes of electricity lashed across the convoluted landscape, carving out huge gashes in the colorful, occasionally edible land masses. Just as soon as the maelstrom began, it ceased, collapsing back in on Drake who was kneeling in a huge spiraling crater, steam wafting from his skin. The witch peaked out from behind her unharmed purple block, shaking slightly. Matthew collapsed in a heap, his hastily erected green shield of nature energy cracking apart in a shower of green shards. Drake stood to his feet, shaking slightly, his skin fading back to its normal color. The witch nervously wet her lips. "He's ready"

Grocery Shopping for a Foot

Most of the time when you begin working out, its difficult to notice any difference in your body, but despite this you make improvement with how much weight you can lift. It was quite a similar situation for Drake who had not whatsoever expected the sudden outburst of energy, and was quite befuddled as he rose to his feet in the middle of the crater. Around him the non zone began fading away, changing back to the considerably less colorful library. Matthew was sprawled on the couch, muttering about

cupcakes and meat cleavers. The witch was staring intently at Drake. “The non zone tends to pull out one’s power in interesting ways. This however, was not expected,” she muttered. “But in battle you’ll have to be sure not to blow your load so early sonny, especially against the Demon King.” The witch waved her hand in a circle, creating a hole in reality through which she shoved her arm, seeming to rummage around inside, pulling out a whip, some ropes, and various other interesting objects before finally locating what appeared to be a lump of charcoal. “Stand still now dearie” Drake did as he was told, still bleary from the colossal use of magic. The witch reached forwards, placing the charcoal on Drake’s right cheek (the one on his face), and began expertly drawing a complicated series of symbols and shapes, forming a circle with a number of overlapping squares and triangles inside, accompanied by a number of complex runic markings. Satisfied, the witch tossed the charcoal back into the void gate which snapped closed with a sound like a burp. “Now,” stated the witch. “It’s time for you to storm the bastion of evil single handedly.” Drake found this idea quite absurd and let out a snicker. The witch however, did not look like she was joking.

IN OTHER NEWS

Meanwhile, as Drake was preparing for the ultimate suicide mission against all the forces of evil, his only aid being a barely functioning druid, Ciara was off having the time of her life. After suffering the injustice of the poor kitty dying she decided she could no longer put up with her brother. This, combined with her intense desire to follow the butterfly she had seen alight on the windowsill, caused her to set off on her own. Now you see, dragons are beings of an inherently magical nature and are in themselves a huge wellspring of magic. And as any well practiced magician knows, sources of magical energy attract each other, which is why it is much less likely to have a magical encounter as a regular mortal with little magic energy at all. Which is why ciara found it quite odd that there was a teenage girl staring her down between a pair of bushes. After carefully mulling it over ciara

decided it was just a harmless witch studying a dragon(they are a rare species after all) and went back to her butterfly. Since ciara is occupied with a butterfly and this maybe witch is occupied with ciara, a brief but “important” explanation of dragons is due. You see dragons aren’t rare for the reasons you would expect as a matter of fact they used to be plenty abundant and they weren’t overly hunted as its rather impractical to run around chasing a flying bundle of impenetrable scales with swords that barely equivocate to a toothpick from the dragon’s viewpoint. Alas, interbreeding with other species has caused the purebread species to decline steeply overtime. Thus most “dragons” are merely mildly magical white people and a large amount of dragon blood is extremely rare. Ciara however was an exception to this general rule, being a full half dragon as opposed to the second most pure dragon mix who happens to be only one sixteenth dragon. In any case the harmless girl in the bushes pulled out a blow dart reed and placed it between her lips. Ciara felt a sharp prick on her neck, and watched as the butterfly seemed to get farther and farther away as the ground got closer and closer, and her eyelids got heavier and heavier. Ciara decided it was an appropriate time for a nap and passed out happily. She awoke to find herself in a room with crack spindled concrete walls, a man in a porkpie hat and a pinstripe suit staring down at her. Ciara tilted her head and asked the man, “Where’s your saxophone Mr.?” The man released a low chortle, his face twisting into a lopsided grin, though Ciara couldn't tell if it reached his eyes through his thick, dark tinted glasses. Glancing down, Ciara found her hands to be shackled and let out a sharp cough, spitting out a glob of phlegm with the properties of lava which melted through the iron fetters. The man ignored the lava burning a hole in his floor and began speaking in a thick italian accent, his extra chins jiggling slightly with each word. “Welcome little dragon girl. My name is Giovanni Bianchi. We went to great lengths to bring you here.” There was something enticing and extremely likeable about the man. He reminded Ciara of the man clad in white who had once offered her candy to get inside his van. The man grinned down and offered his thick calloused hand. She hesitated for a moment, and reached out to take it.

One Does Not Simply Walk Into Mordor

Drake had never liked hiking. Back in elementary school when he had participated in cub scouts, he had been forced to enjoy countless miles of absolutely mind numbing walking through various forests and historical forests. Drake was thus very unhappy to find himself hiking once again, especially as this particular hike's destination was the very center of hell, where he would most likely suffer a horribly painful death. Matthew was dragging himself along behind Drake, looking like he wanted to lie down and take a nap and throw up simultaneously. After saying their goodbyes at the witch's dwelling, the duo had set out with a loose set of instructions amounting to little more than scribbled lines on a sheet of raggedy paper. "Down here the intent is what matters. If you want to get to Varex you simply must will it." She wagged a finger. "But don't think that means you'll get there instantly, you'll still have to traverse a good bit of distance, and you'll have to make the right turns at the waymarks I've marked on the map. Some places in the underworld are unavoidable" Drake shook his head. It'd been almost an hour and they hadn't even come to the first waypoint. But as so often happens when traveling in hell, Drake stumbled upon what he was looking for when he least expected it. To his chagrin however, was that the exact object he and Matthew had been walking in attempt to find, was the great lake of damned souls. Drake barely had time to look up from his map before sighing with distaste and falling in headfirst and looking rather miffed about it.

