

The Phargol-Horn

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www.krystonia.net

e-mail: krystoniaclub@hotmail.com

Shanagaling

They say that the shortest distance between two points is a straight line. While this is true, it is not a very reliable way to look at being the correct answer all the time. Whoever said this must have never lived in Krystonia. I'm not sure anyone in Krystonia does anything in a straight line. Where would the adventure be with no curves in your path? I myself enjoy a few curves thrown my way. It challenges the mind, stimulates the spirit and helps one to learn to be able to deal with obstacles that all too often get in your way.

On the other hand with my advanced years I do not look forward to having my way blocked at every turn. This would seem to be a bit masochistic. I don't want to make a pot of tea hoping that the pot will boil over, the tea bag will break and the cup chip. But it doesn't bother me if the water gets a little too hot.

With all this said I guess I should get back to the point where all my ramblings above have a point of reference.

It is customary for everyone in Krystonia at certain intervals to leave their residence for a period of time. This is done on foot and the length varies. The route is unplanned. The name for this adventure is called Shanagaling.

Among the many benefits of Shanagaling is physical fitness. Some are known to have walked more total distance than going from the Steppes to the Obelisk. There is rumor that one individual went so far that he fell right off the edge of the world.

Clearing of ones mind is a benefit that many report upon their return. Sort of like picking up a stack of scrolls, cleaning the table that they rested on and then placing them back down in a more precise order.

And I don't want to forget the challenge of survival. These skills are too often lost from their lack of use. With the comfortable life style that we all enjoy who wouldn't forget some of the things that we are taught when young. Take me for example, just the other day a new contraption was introduced that cools your dwelling. It is a circular item that has feathers attached inside. As the wind blows the feathers catch the air making the air inside circulate. A few ice particles placed inside start to melt and let off a cooling vapor. What will they think of next?

My Shanagal

I rose early that morning, even earlier than I usually do. This allowed me to leave without anyone noticing me. You do not declare to others that you are taking a Shanagal. It is however customary that you do leave a note or some notice behind to be found. This way you do not cause an all out panic as one young dragon, who will remain nameless (Koozl), with the likes of N'Borg and his legions and the Mughrahs you want to be sure to leave out the possibility that you have been kidnapped.

I did not pack many supplies as the idea is to revitalize your survival skills. Also you are not fooling anyone of your intentions if you are seen with a cart full of necessities. Haaph once started his journey by loading up three carts. He didn't make it to the end of the Carin Tor before one of the carts broke down.

I marched to the edge of the woods and quickly disappeared into them. The high brush seemed to swallow me whole. The dense forest covered everything very well, even the large hole that I fell into after only a few steps. This did little to boost my self confidence.

I righted myself, picked some stickers out of my gown and proceeded forward. That is for about two more steps at which time I fell into another hole. If not for my desire to stay quiet I would have screamed to the high moons. I once again lifted myself out of the hole and removed even more stickers from my clothing.

A few early small miscues were not going to stop me. If I could find who was digging these holes I would certainly give them a piece of my mind. If I fell again I would possibly not have much mind left. I was starting to feel a bit out of sorts.

Then it happened a third time. But this time was different. I tumbled and tumbled for what seemed like a very long time finally coming to rest stuck in something that left me totally immobilized. At this point I did the noble thing and passed out.

When I came through I was quite disoriented. Aches and pains was my only condition. I felt very warm. This surprised me as when I left my tree hut it was quite brisk outside. My nose itched and I struggled to scratch it with no success. A large knot was felt rising on the top of my head. Whereas I could pick stickers from my clothes before, now they were imbedded in places that I can not discuss. Overall I guess you could say that I was quite miserable.

It appeared that I now found myself in some sort of cavern. The walls were lit by a few torches placed along them. The lantern provided kind of a strange cast allowing you to see a little but not enough to distinguish the surroundings. One thing was for sure, it was definitely getting hotter and hotter, uncomfortably so.

Wiggling my neck I finally worked my head loose enough where I could move around enough to be able to look about. Still there was not much to be seen. And then I looked down. My heart began to pound, my eyes bulged and I wanted to scream but a tight band around my throat prohibited me from making a sound.

I now knew why I was so uncomfortably hot. Approximately 12 inches directly below me was a huge boiling pot. Never have I claimed to be the smartest individual but this did not require great intelligence. If you found something hanging above a pot of boiling water what would you think? Dinner is served!

A solution had to be found. How do I get loose? If I did how do I avoid falling into the pot? Where was I? Are they serving vegetables also? As you can see my thought process was becoming a bit scattered.

Then my right arm flew loose from the webbing, falling to my side. Next my right leg and my head followed. I could feel something behind me. Was I being readied to drop into the pot? Another few cuts and all that was still attached to the webbing was my left arm. My body was now in a position to where I could swing it to the left. Still no sign of what was going on behind me or who was cutting my bonds.

I could now see a tall pile of something that if I swung myself strongly enough and at the same time pulled away my left arm possibly I could land on it. Or on the other hand if I did it wrong or miscalculated land smack dab in the middle of a boiling pot.

My choices seemed quite limited. Try to find dinner as I was getting quite hungry, or be dinner. Counting to three I swung my body as hard as I could while pulling away my left arm from the web. I hit the top of the pile. Landing on the pile was not comfortable but it sure was better than the boiling pot.

The pile seemed to be full of sharp objects of all shapes and size. Picking one up, I examined it. It was obvious what the pile consisted of, bones. My sense of finding a way out was now at a new level. Whoever lived here was bound to be somewhere around and I did not want to meet them.

Removing a torch from the wall I started to look about. This individual was a very messy housekeeper. Bones here, bones there, clothes here, clothes there. A huge ball of fur rested in the corner. Probably the most beautiful fur I had ever seen. I had to feel it. One stroke was not enough and second had to be taken. Have you ever heard the expression about leaving well enough alone?

The ball began to unfurl, unfurl and unfurl some more. I had to find a place to hide. Jumping behind a stack of clothes I peered over the top. A face was starting to appear from the middle of the fur. If you want to call it a face. More like an eyeball with a small nose and many jagged teeth. This was one ugly something.

Yawn after yawn took place. This gave me a better view of the teeth. There were lined in row after row. The yawning gave the cave a rather disgusting odor. Not that it smelled all that good before. It reminded me of when the wizards at the Obelisk would enter a special chamber where no foot coverings were allowed. As they removed their shoes a distinct odor would be noticed. Of course it wasn't my feet that added to the strong smell. It was all the others wizards.

As the eyeball began to focus it found the cuts in the web and that dinner was no longer obviously hanging above the pot. Two small legs appeared from the fur and the creature rose slightly. Considering how small the legs were and the huge size of the body it moved quite quickly. The proportion of the body to the legs made it obvious that this thing sure ate a lot and was badly in need of exercise.

Graceful it was not. Disoriented it was. The pot was its destination. I assume with the hope of finding that I was inside. It approached the pot and tried to look inside but was having difficulty since the pot was taller than the creature.

Seeing a stack of bones beside the pot it began to climb up them. This was the same stack of bones that I had swung onto when escaping the net and had removed a few for observation. As it made its way to the top the pile shifted. Being so top heavy it was impossible for the creature to keep its balance. The pile tipped towards the pot. Next there was a large plop and boiling water went in all directions. I'm not sure but words were coming from the pot that I had never heard before. They did not seem to have a pleasant meaning.

The creature had met its demise at its own hands. I actually felt sorry for it for a few moments. Then I remembered that not too many moments ago I was going to meet a terrible fate by this creature's hands. After all, sorrow does have its limits. Too bad about the fur though, what a great rug it would have made.

I had to focus. Where was I and how am I going to get out of here? What if this creature was one of many? Time to get moving.

Once again I removed a torch from the wall. The flame seemed to blow back towards me. This would seem to indicate that there was a draft. Following the draft would be my course. It was as good a choice as any since I had no idea where I was going or where I was at.

More and more tunnels lay ahead. I just kept following my instinct with the hope that I could find my way out. I only wish I was not in such a great panic for the things I encountered were truly amazing.

Lining one tunnel was beautiful twinkling stars with long tails that sped into the distance. Several of the tunnels had bright colors that flashed on and off. Brilliant blues, gorgeous greens and radiant reds flashed all around me. Then I was somewhere and the smell of sweet dough overtook me. Bright light nearly blinded me and I felt as the tunnel moved around me.

My eyes opened wide to the surprise of Graffyn, Grunch and several others leaning over me. I must have made my miraculous escape. I began to blurt out all that I had encountered and boast about the way I had conquered the creature.

They stood back and stared. Some were scratching their heads and expressed that they were having a little trouble believing my story. How could this be, I was not one to exaggerate.

All they knew was that Rueggan had noticed me walking from my hut. He saw me enter the woods and fall three times. Becoming alarmed after the third fall he ran over to where I lay. Afraid that I had been hurt he rolled me onto a stretcher and tied me down so if I had to be moved I would not fall off. Then he placed a fur pillow to cushion my head. I was moaning and had a large bump on my head that concerned them. It appeared my only concern was for my stomach since I kept speaking of being hungry so they had tried to put a charcoal cookie in my mouth.

I got up assuring them all that I was fine. Thanking them for all their concern I made my way back to my hut. I would save Shanagaling for another day.

**Do you really think I'm nutty enough to say who I am,
One Embarrassed Wizard,**

Have a Great Holiday Season!!!!