

YETI, IT'S COLD OUTSIDE

The Tale

You might think that hanging upside down would clear the sinuses. Clear the head, get the juices flowing to the brain meat. Unclog a few synapses, that sort of thing.

You'd be wrong.

I bet you're wrong about a lot of things.

Speaking as someone who is currently hanging upside down, I can say that it does provide one with a new way of looking at things, but I will not say that it's an improvement from the norm. Disorienting. I call it the inversion vision position confusion.

Ha.

Or maybe the cold and all the blood pooling inside my head is just making me a little logy.

The sound of a yeti eating my mule, David... no, it was Welsingame... er... oh, hells, I don't even try to remember their names any more. I go through a lot of mules. Anyways, the sound of the yeti eating it is a very loud and crunchy distraction.

I'm sorry if I seem a bit grumpy, but I just now realized that the ice securing my feet to the ceiling of this cave is yellow.

I'm a Halfling. I follow the traditions. I usually go adventuring barefoot.

And I'm hanging upside down in a snow cave, facing a wall, my feet welded to the ceiling by yellow ice.

So please forgive my less than sunny disposition. Chilling in a yeti's cooler does that to me.

The term "cave" is perhaps overly generous, it was just a long thin crack in the frozen hillside, a jagged

hallway lit softly by chill sunlight gloaming through the ice above. Would have been a sight to appreciate if it wasn't for my current predicament. A quiet grunt escaped my lips as I tried to turn to survey my surroundings.

The crunching paused.

Awkwardly swaying, I twisted a bit to get a better look at the yeti.

If you haven't seen one yourself, they look like some mad sorcerer had combined the smelliest and ugliest bits of a bear, a gorilla, and an ogre. Fifteen feet of muscle and violence, with claws and horns protruding from its fur at angles that made my stomach queasy. I mean, hanging upside down wasn't doing my belly any favors anyways, but, the claws... well, this one was holding an entire donkey haunch the way I might hold a chicken leg. Its face and arms were covered in steaming blood, and it sat perfectly still, glaring at me as I held my breath and desperately tried to stop moving. Its eyes narrowed, and it slowly began chewing again, the meat in its hand apparently of more interest than a half-frozen Halfling at the far end of the cave.

A donkey shank in the hand is worth two frozen Halflings in the ceiling, as they say. And since I'm only ONE frozen Halfling, that math works out in my favor. For however long that donkey shank lasts.

Keeping as still as I could, I looked down the crevasse away from the yeti. The diffused light would have been pleasant under other circumstances, but here it just seemed to highlight my likely future – a carpet of bones strewn from the far end of the lair right up to directly below my head. Some of the more interesting things poking up from the icy floor were something that looked like the ribcage of an entire yak, the left half of a bear's skull, a well-gnawed caribou antler,



and... well, hello there - the ornate basket hilt of a beautiful sword.

A loud crack caught my attention.

I surreptitiously glanced towards the yeti again. The beast had snapped the donkey's femur in half, and was greedily (and sloppily) sucking the marrow out. I could almost swear it was humming a happy little tune to itself.

"Oh, yes, Murrog loves sucking the marrow from bones. It's his favorite part of a meal."

I froze... well, no, I was already freezing. I held perfectly still. The voice was coming from inside my head.

I am often my own best inspiration, muse, and audience, but I've never had my inner monologue talk back to me when I was sober. And never ever with perfect aristocratic diction.

Maybe this was a side effect of hanging upside down for so long? Maybe I'd finally snapped like that mule's legbone. Mother said it was inevitable.

"No, sir, you haven't lost your mind - I am addressing you. Allow me to introduce myself - I am..." and here the disembodied voice took on a sheepish tone, pausing to sigh before continuing, "... 'toothpick'..."

I stared at the air around me, looking for a clue in the faintly luminescent walls. No source for the voice was immediately apparent. "Um... hello, spirit. Also, what kind of a name is Toothpick for a spirit?!"

"*ahem* Not a spirit, sir. I'm the sword. And toothpick is what he calls me."

I blinked. A talking sword? A talking sword!! I'd heard tale of such things - mighty magical weapons of great cunning and power, with wills and agendas of their own! Holding grudges for thousands of years, devoted to deities or quests long-forgotten by anyone but themselves! If I could but reach it, surely I'd be saved!

Visions of myself carrying the sword aloft while wearing a cape and ornate armor, sitting astride a mighty war-pony, leading heroes to the most legendary meals ever envisioned, composing epic ballads in my own honor, briefly danced before my eyes, only to be interrupted by a petulant snarl from

the yeti and the rapier's equally pointed reply.

"Don't shush me! And stop calling me that!"

My heroic fantasies evaporated as reality ran into them headfirst. Reality in the form of the yeti's barking laughter, followed by more vulgar slurping noises.

I looked at the sword. "Are you... talking... to the yeti?"

The sword's voice sighed in my mind, sounding wounded, cut to the quick. "The beast insists on calling me his toothpick."

"... yetis have a word for toothpick?"

The sword's posh tone dripped with an elegant mixture of sorrow and condescension. "Perhaps a more precise literal translation would be 'skinny mouth-scratching claw', but I felt that 'toothpick' conveyed the concept accurately enough."

At this, the yeti paused in his mule deboning long enough to hoot with laughter again, slapping his massive hand on the ground.

"What exactly does the yeti – Murragh, was it? – think is so funny?"

Toothpick's psychic voice was resigned. "Murrog. Marr-Ohg. Murrog. Oh nevermind! I don't even know why I bother." The sword sounded almost ready to cry. "He thinks I'm the best joke in the whole world. I talk like food, but I'm not food. The height of yeti wit."

Murrog's laughter increased as he clutched his belly and continued slapping the yak-befootprinted ground, frozen tears forming in the corners of his piggish little eyes.

"Well, what can you do?" This situation seemed untenable. When the yeti laughed, his very large, very jagged, very sharp teeth were on full display.

"What do you mean, sir?"

"Can you burst into flames? Can you fly? Do you have telekinetic powers? What can you DO?!"

The disembodied voice adopted a wounded tone. "I'm very sharp and I can talk. Isn't that enough?"

Exasperated, I sputtered a bit. "But... but, don't talking swords usually have a host of amazing magical powers?"

"I suppose it's possible, but if I do, no-one's ever told me."

At this, I think my irritation got the better of me, for just a moment. A small but very impressively masculine cry of frustration escaped my lips.

"AAUGH!!! YOU'RE USELESS!"

The yeti stopped laughing. He turned his head towards me, narrowed his little red eyes and wiped the tears of laughter away. He stood up and started walking towards me.

I've bravely faced death more times than I can count. Some say that their entire lives flash before their eyes in the moment before the End. With me, it's more like a quick review of my C.V – mentally running down a list of everything I know. Is there anything that can get me out of this?

The yeti was growling menacingly as it walked towards me. I struggled, swaying back and forth, trying in vain to free my feet. The yeti grunted in amusement at my exertions, so I gave him my best attempt at a disarming smile..

"It looks as though our brief acquaintance has come to an end, sir-halfing-who-didn't-even-bother-to-introduce-himself. I'd bid you a hearty farewell, but I think you're just going to be hearty fare, and not well at all in a moment..."

"My name is Alton, and I apologize for saying you're useless. Does the yeti by any chance enjoy singing?"

There was a pause while the weapon relayed my question to the beast. I don't speak yeti, but the curt snarl's meaning was pretty clear.

“... he likes it when food screams.”

I spoke more quickly, trying my best to maintain my friendly smile. “What about cooking? I’m a brilliant chef - truly my skill is a gift to the world! It would be a terrible shame to deprive the whole world of that, right? It would be my great honor to cook for mister - sir! Lord of the Snowy Peaks! - Murrog!”

Murrog simply gnashed his teeth in reply to that one. “...he prefers his meat raw.”

Towering over me, I could smell the abominable creature, something like rotten wool and dirty laundry. Murrog smiled a ghastly smile as he raised his massive clawed hand up, up, up...

“He does have a powerful sweet tooth!”

Like a drowning man grasping at a straw, I blurt “WHATABOUTSWEETSICANMAKEAMAZINGDESSERTSIFIHAVETHERIGHTINGREDIENTS!!!”

The yeti paused, and I heard the first articulate sound I’d heard from him yet! “Uh? oooooOOOooo!”

The claws flashed, shattering my icy bonds, and I fell headfirst into the snow below, right next to Toothpick’s elaborate hilt.

Murrog crouched down low and poked at me. “Ooroo? Oogloogoo!”

“Murrog would like to kindly encourage you to make haste, Mister Alton.”

“Did he eat all of my saddlebags, or just the stupid mule?”

Murrog belched, then said “Ooo.” again, decisively.

“Not *all* the saddlebags, sir.”

I quickly scanned the remnants of my gear and the contents of the cave, making note of the bones and occasional hoofprints visible in the snow. “Alright, then. I’m going to need a yak. A female.”

A second later, Murrog raised an eyebrow and shot me a very judgmental look for a creature covered in donkey blood with yellow ice under his fingernails.

“For the MILK, Toothpick, for the milk.”

“Ah, yes, of course sir.”

Murrog said “OOO!”, scrambled to his feet and ran out of the cave. The sounds of battle echoed back inside almost immediately, with growling and mooing and what I swear sounded like someone calling out the name of my ex-boyfriend, and then Murrog was dragging an unconscious dire yak into the cave.

Three hours later it was ready. I scavenged quite a bit of sugar and some honey from my lightly-chewed saddlebags, and a bit of nutmeg and cinnamon, too. A broken leg bone of indeterminate origin sufficed to churn the mixture, using a circular hole in the ice as a makeshift bowl.

The milk was the fun part. My beautiful hands were ice-cold - as soon as I grasped the yak’s soft warm udder with them, she awoke with an indignant bellow and nearly brained me with an errant hoof. Murrog kindly put her in a headlock and dragged her over to the hole so I could more easily deposit the yak juice into it. He craned his neck to watch the action - I suspect he was unaware that yaks could produce a consumable other than meat and marrow. I breathed on my hands and rubbed them together to warm them up, and the rhinoceros-sized beast calmed down considerably. Most beings don’t appreciate cold hands on their teats.

Murrog’s fangs drew uncomfortably close to my head as he leaned in to watch the milking more closely. I gave him another friendly smile, and the yeti repaid me with a blast of fetid breath to my face, gurgling phlegmy laughter at me.

“Does he think I’m funny, Toothpick?”

“Oh, he does, he thinks you’re hilarious. Showing one’s teeth is an act of aggression amongst yetis - you’re so petite that it makes him giggle every time.”

“Ah! A-heh... heh... hmmm.” I resolved to be more stingy with my facial expressions in the future.

I churned the mixture until I thought my arm would fall off - gallons and gallons and gallons of rough ice cream, made in a place I had begun to think of as the icehole of the world. Murrog was staring at it with a disturbing intensity, occasionally licking his lips as the concoction firmed up. I stepped back and gestured at the hole - “Time for dessert!”

Murrog POUNCED on the ice cream, diving face first into it and slurping it up while making distressingly ardorous noises. I watched in awe and horror as his belly - already full of my unfortunate donkey ‘whatever-the-hell-his-name-was’ - distended to truly gravid proportions.

“Oh my dear.”

“Yeah, you said it, Toothpick.”

Murrog finished the whole batch and flopped down onto his side, panting, out of breath. “Ooo rooo Olooloo.”

“Murrog suggests that tomorrow you make a larger batch. He’s out of donkey.”

The yeti reached out and patted me on the head, twice. My feet sank an inch into the floor from the force of the ‘friendly’ taps. He rolled over, farted, and began snoring immediately.

“In that case, Toothpick, I think I shall bid you both farewell tonight.”

“Please, sir! Take me with you! I don’t even know how long I’ve been here in this brute’s lair, but I long for civilized company! I swear I will serve you well!”

“... do I have your word on that, Toothpick?”

“You do, sir. But, please, don’t call me Toothpick. I despise that name.”

“Alright then.” I tucked the rapier into my belt, silently gathered what few useful things were remaining from my baggage and crept out of the cave. It was cold and

dark and outside - I savored the fresh icy breeze and shivered with joy. Wonderful compared to the yeti’s crevasse. The yak that I had been milking earlier seemed accustomed to me (or perhaps I’m simply too small to be of concern to a beast of that size), so she let me approach. I climbed up onto a rock near her shoulder, took two steps back and leapt onto her with a little running start. She snorted and walked off downhill at a trot. “I owe you one for telling me about the sweet tooth...”

“...How do you like the name... Heinrich?”

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YETI "FRIED" ICE CREAM

The Recipe

FROM THE CHEF

Cooking in the frigid reaches can be a challenge, but the warm feelings of a good meal are all the more precious when the embers grow cold. While many decline chilled dishes in such a climate, I find that this treat can never be justly denied, as it goes with every occasion.

Deliciously Yours,

Alton Green

PREPARATION NOTES

Truly fried ice cream can be made, but its a technical challenge with a lot of risk if the breading isn't done just so. To avoid that, but enjoy all the delicious and easy flavors of a similar concept, enjoy this recipe that creates a crunchy, toasty shell around your favorite treats.

FRIED ICE CREAM

Yields: 8 servings

Time: 30 minutes

Difficulty: Easy

Contains: Sugar, Gluten, Dairy

Requires: Saute Pan, Plastic Bags, Sheet Pan, Spatula

INGREDIENTS

Corn Flakes Cereal	6 cups
Butter	1/2 cup
Ground Cinnamon	2 1/2 tsp
Ice Cream	32 oz

Optional

Shredded, sweetened coconut	As needed
Walnuts/pecans, finely chopped	As needed
Sprinkles	As needed
Maraschino cherries, fresh fruit	As needed
Whipped cream	As needed
Sauce (chocolate, caramel, honey)	As needed

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Begin by putting cereal into a plastic bag and closing tightly, being sure to push out as much air as possible. Using your hands, crush cereal until it becomes fine granules. At this point, you may mix in sweetened shredded coconut or finely chopped nuts to create a more interesting texture. It is not required.



2. In a large pot, melt butter on medium-heat. Add cinnamon and crushed cereal (plus add-ins). Saute lightly for 2-3 minutes; you will be able to smell a toasty flavor, the cereal should become crispy.



3.



Pour mixture out onto a sheet pan, creating lots of surface area to let it cool off. After about ten minutes, it should be ready. Add sprinkles at this

time, pouring them lightly throughout the sheet pan to add sprinkles to your “fried” crust.



4. Remove ice cream from freezer, shaping in your hands to get a rounded, spherical shape. Immediately place the ball in the mixture and roll it until there is a thorough, even coat around all sides, pressing cornflakes into the outer surface to create a thick coating.

5. Place in the freezer for 10-15 minutes to allow them to reset. Add toppings just before serving.



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GAMING CONTENT

A PINCH OF INSPIRATION

- Where is the cave located? On an icy continent, or perhaps above the snowline of a mountain range?
- What else is in the cave?
- Could useful trade be worked out with yetis, sweets or booze for Dire Yak fur, meat, milk?
- What happens when a gaggle of teenage yetis decide to raid a dwarven brewery, then go on a drunken bender rampage?

DIRE YAK MILK

Provides anyone who drinks it with temporary protection from cold, and enough calories to feed you for an entire day, but gives you horrible gas.

DIRE YAK

Large Beast, Neutral

Armor Class 15 (natural armor)

Hit Points 38 (4d10+16)

Speed 40 ft

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
20 (+5)	10 (+0)	16 (+3)	2 (-4)	10 (+0)	6 (-2)

Senses Passive Perception 10

Challenge 6 (2300 XP)

ACTIONS

Gore *Melee Weapon Attack*; +5 to hit, reach 5 ft. Hit: 14 (2d8+6) piercing damage.

Toss Any gore attack that does more than half (13) damage will knock medium or smaller targets *prone* if they fail a DC 15 Dexterity (or Strength, whichever stat is higher) check. Small targets may be thrown a significant distance at the DM's discretion.

Dire Yaks are immune to non-magical cold effects and take minimum damage from cold-based magical sources, automatically passing saving throws against magical cold-based effects.

Dire Yak Fur can be fashioned into heavy winter gear that offers nearly magical levels of protection against cold (the exact quality of the protection will depend on the skill of the garment maker and the quality of the hide).

Exceptional individuals may have additional horns, rows of spines down their backs, or even a vicious kick attack in addition to the horn gore.

