

Chapter 14

THE WYN GATE

After a short stretch through The Lost Forest, the trio and Gole come upon a beautiful scenic garden. High ivy-covered walls are colorfully landscaped with rocks, trees of all sorts and neatly planted flowers. The sky is a clear, warm blue and the manicured area is filled with the beautiful sound of chirping birds. Gole, energetic and full of the discover spirit, sniffs the surroundings.

Looking around and quite impressed, Billy says, "This place kinda reminds me of home. I can't wait to tell Grandma about it. Gosh, you know it seems like forever since I've seen her."

Vizhon mentions that she would love to meet Billy's grandma while the prince relates that he feels he practically knows her already.

Vizhon suddenly points and exclaims, "Look! There's the gate."

Billy confidently replies, "That's it alright. This was easy. I can't believe I made such a big deal out of it."

Prince Beleve agrees and the three of them approach the gate. There's a display of wise cracks between Billy and the prince like: "Lady's first! Chickens lead the way!" which terribly annoys Vizhon.

Gole, in the meantime, stares, sniffs at the rocks and then starts to tug at something.

Disgusted with Billy and the prince's childishness, Vizhon pushes herself through them to reach the gate. Suddenly a loud dragon roar is heard and a piercing flame shoots out. Vizhon is knocked on the ground - unconscious.

Immediately there's a drastic change in the atmosphere. Fog begins to swirl like dizzy dancers while thunder and lightning begin their deafening, frightful sounds.

Dazed and overwhelmed by what is happening, the prince runs to Vizhon and yells, "VIZHON!" No answer. Finally a growling, blowtorch voice bellows, "Not so fast!"

Frightened, Billy runs behind one of the rocks. Another resounding roar is heard; another piercing flame shoots out at the prince, and he too falls on the ground - unconscious.

Gole sees Vizhon and the prince motionless, stares at the now visible, huge, green, orange-spotted dragon, shivers and starts to run away. A louder roar is heard while more flames shoot from the dragon. Gole flies back and lands in a heap on the ground.

Seeing this in disbelief, Billy darts from behind the rock, goes to Gole and cradles him. Terribly saddened, he begins to cry. "What happened? What happened?" he screams. Gole points to the dragon, weakly howls then falls unconscious.

Bewildered, angry and full of tears, he yells, "What am I gonna do? WHAT AM I GONNA DO?"

Sarcastically the dragon laughs and roars like a booming canon, "NOTHIN!"

"He was my best friend!" shouts Billy. "What have you done to him, you monster?"

No response! "Answer me!" screams Billy.
"Who are you?"

"We're old friends." bellows the dragon.
"Don't you recognize me?"

"We're NOT old friends!" replies Billy
angrily.

"Oh, yes, we are!" snorts the dragon.

Confused and full of vengeance, Billy
questions again, "Who are you?"

A loud, horror-house growl from the dragon
identifies himself as Xcuses. Billy steps back
a few paces as the dragon then relates why
he and Billy are old friends:

"Xcuses! Xcuses!

**Like a thousand abuses
Are worthless words for you.
Hocus Pocus won't make you focus
On dreams you want to do.**

Xcuses! Xcuses!

**Like a hangman's noose is
Your killer in disguise.
Nothin' plus nothin' proves my assumption
That fools are never wise."**

He goes on with a more determined, piercing pitch.

"Xcuses! Xcuses!

Like a young stray goose is -

Silly, dumb and lost.

Yes, he will play and he will stray,

And he will pay the cost."

Eh, Ha, Ha, Ha, Ha, Ha, Ha, Ha!

Suddenly the atmosphere becomes dense. Strange flashing lights begin to circle Billy. He glares and stares in amazement as the bellowing, fire-sspittin' dragon continues:

"Remember, Billy, what you told your teacher? 'My dog ate my homework.'"

"My dog DID eat my homework," snarls Billy.

"NO!" echoes the dragon, underlining his gruff answer with a low rumbling laugh.

"Remember too: 'Dad's car broke down. I overslept! I got sick and threw up!'"

Billy tries to convince the dragon that he did get sick and the car did break down, but

Xcuses knows better. He bitterly scolds him by mentioning about Billy's bad attitude in NOT wanting to get up, and NOT being sick just to get away with something Billy didn't WANT to do.

To save face, Billy calls Xcuses a liar.

"Me? Me?" uproariously laughs Xcuses who then continues:

"Xcuses! Xcuses!

You had a job and didn't do it!

Xcuses! Xcuses!

You had a job and you blew it!"

Billy tries to reason with Xcuses by mentioning that he's too hard on him, that he didn't really understand Billy's circumstances.

"There are times kids like me need a helping hand," says Billy.

Xcuses, however, doesn't buy Billy's reasoning.

"You say you need a helping hand,

But what good would it do?

You made your bed and like I said,
You're just a loser too."

Hearing this, Billy becomes enraged. "I'll show you who's a loser!" he shouts, and then he takes out the beaming Sword of Valor and stands firm against his accuser.

Seeing this act of sudden bravery, Xcuses laughs,

"So you want to kill me?
Eh, Ha, Ha, Ha, Ha, Ha, Ha, Ha!
Come on! Come on! I bring EVERYBODY
down!"

Then with the frenzy of an uncontrolled, rumbling avalanche, Xcuses violently roars:

"Xcuses! Xcuses!
Like a thousand abuses
Become a hard brick wall,
But you've abused them many times,
And that's your downfall!

Eh, Ha, Ha, Ha, Ha, Ha, Ha, Ha!

Feel my fire!
Feel my sting!
With me you can't do anything!
With me you won't go anywhere -
And why?"

Snorting with disgust and climaxing with a wild, cackling, hyena laugh states:

"Cause YOU - DON'T - CARE!"

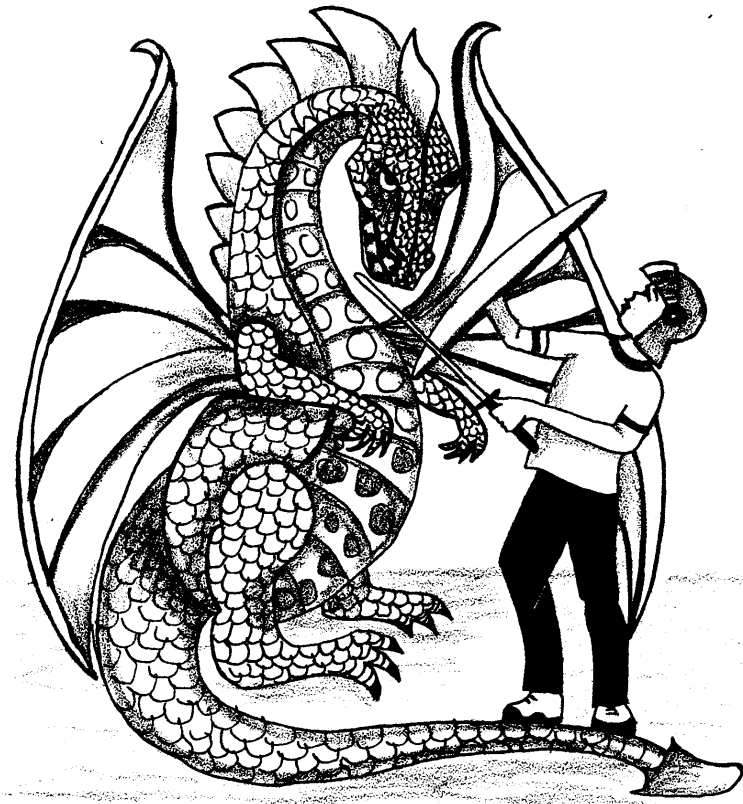
"I DO CARE! I DO CARE!" screams Billy.

"YOU DON'T CARE!" resounds Xcuses.

"I DO! I DO!" shrieks Billy.

"YOU LIE! NOW DIE!" scowls Xcuses as he attacks Billy.

Red-orange flames shoot from Xcuses' venomous mouth and overwhelmingly converge on Billy who fights them back with his Sword of Valor and his Shield of POZ. Not being able to get to Billy as expected, Xcuses becomes angrier. With a violent thrust of his raised head, he leans back and thunderously roars.



Billy Battles Xcuses

Billy, stunned, slightly confused and off guard for the moment, trips and falls. Finding his opportunity, Xcuses devilishly smiles and positions himself for the kill. Alert to the sudden danger, Billy rolls to his left to avoid the frontal onslaught, and just as Xcuses plunges like an attacking, venomous cobra to finish him off, Billy bravely braces himself and stabs The Sword of Valor into Xcuses' heart. There's a painful roar, a low, grinding groan, a gurgling moan and with a slight puff of black, bubbling smoke from his blood-dripping mouth, Xcuses falls with a thunderous boom - DEAD.

After a moment of silence, Billy gets up and goes to Gole. The storm subsides. The sky clears and the birds begin to chirp.

Terribly hurt and thinking his friend is dead, Billy cries, "Oh, Gole, what am I going to do now?"

Suddenly Gole's leg starts to twitch, slowly at first, and then it gains momentum until Billy notices it. By this time, it's going crazy. Overjoyed, Billy laughs and tickles Gole's belly. Gole licks his face.

"YOU'RE ALIVE! YOU'RE ALIVE!" Billy yells as they both embrace.

Vizhon and Prince Beleve slowly wake up. They look around and are in disbelief when they see Xcuses dead.

"What happened?" inquires the prince to Vizhon. Then he turns to the gate and surprisingly exclaims, "Look! The gate's open!"

"Billy, did you do this?" asks Vizhon.

And with a wink in his eye, he replies, "Wouldn't you like to know?"

