

## Fire Like A Dragon – Tsz Shuen , Year 4, NSW

As he drew and drew, I sprang up from the pavement and sprinted across the street, not daring to look back.

“Hey, I’ll catch you!” a voice boomed behind me as cold sweat dribbled down my hot cheek.

“It’s Sam again, always picking on me,” I murmured in helplessness. My face was covered with rude words and terrible drawings.

You see, I was walking to school and suddenly bumped into the person I hated the most, Sam. He tricked me every single day, and today was no exception. I managed to slip away from his grasp while he was painting on my face.

“You can’t get rid of me, stupid!” he yelled after me.

I ran as fast as I could and something caught my eye. It was an ancient wooden gate with scratches all over the black paint. A cold shiver ran down my spine, the hairs on the back of my neck stood up, and a sense of foreboding washed over me. I halted to a stop and observed the gate for a few minutes. Then, I spotted the lock and a key on the ground. Holding my breath, I unlocked the primeval gate.

As I pushed open the gate, I heard a creaking sound that echoed throughout the neighbourhood. The gate swung open, revealing a dark, musty tunnel. Without hesitation, I stepped inside.

“Ahh!” I screamed at the top of my lungs as I stumbled on a loose rock and tumbled down a muddy slide.

After a few twists and turns, I landed in a dimly lit room. The air was heavy with the scent of dampness and mildew. I could barely see anything in the darkness.

Suddenly, a rusty voice echoed around the room.

“Who’s there?” it boomed.

I shivered as I replied, “M-My name is Zyair. I-I just fell in this room.” I squeaked like a mouse, but I could see nobody.

The voice boomed again, “You intruder will be sent to the lava. Argh!”

The scream was full of rage, like a beast unleashed. The muddy floor below me suddenly shifted apart, and I fell again into a lower dungeon.

“Hey, what are you doing here?”

In front of me was a tiny dragon with iridescent scales that shimmered in the dark. Smoke puffed out of his mouth, and I caught a faint whiff of fire. I soon realised we were both trapped in a cage.

“H-Hi, I’m Zyair,” I forced myself to speak, but my voice sounded unused.

“I’m Flare. There’s no need to be scared of me, you know? I’m just a plain dragon who won’t do any harm, I can’t even breathe fire. I have been in this cage since birth,” the curious dragon spoke, blinking his innocent eyes.

The little dragon was trapped in a small cramped cage, its wings were folded tightly against its body, as if trying to make itself as small as possible.

As I approached, I could see the fear and desperation etched on Flare’s face. Its tiny body trembled with each breath, and I could hear the soft whimpers escaping from its throat. I could feel the heat emanating from its scaly skin, a sign that it was in distress. Its claws scraped uselessly against the metal bars of the cage, as if trying to claw its way to freedom.

My heart raced as I looked at Flare, trapped in the cage. I was all too familiar with the agony of feeling utterly helpless, in front of the bully, as if my hands were tied and my voice was silenced. The pain of watching Flare in suffering, knowing there was little I could do to ease his torment, was a weight that bore down on me like a thousand tons. It was a feeling that had haunted me before, and one that I knew all too well.

Moved by Flare's plight, an idea suddenly sprang to my mind like a spark igniting a fire.

“I’ve got an escape plan, let’s try...” I whispered to Flare. I grabbed two rocks and placed some dry grass in between, fiercely rubbing two rocks until smoke appeared. I urged Flare, “Now take a deep breath and keep it in your tummy. Once I say ‘FIRE’ then you breathe out.”

Flare hesitated, his body trembling with fear.

“I’m sorry,” he said, his voice barely above a whisper. “I can’t breathe fire.”

But I wouldn’t take no for an answer. “You can do this, Flare. I can sense the fire inside your body. There’s always a way. It’s just about whether you try or not,” I said firmly, my voice rising with conviction. “Believe in yourself, and anything is possible. Now, FIRE!”

Flare’s jaws opened wide, a burst of flames shot out with a deafening roar. The flames were like a red-hot inferno, scorching everything. The sound of the fire was like a thunderstorm, crackling with an intensity that made my bones vibrate. As Flare breathed fire, his body glowed with a fiery aura and I could see the determination in his eyes. The heat was intense, and the cage began to buckle and warp under the pressure. I could see a glimmer of light up ahead, and I knew we had to move fast.

“Come on, Flare!” I shouted, grabbing his claw and pulling him towards the light. Together, we ran through a dark tunnel, the flames illuminating our path. The rush of adrenaline was like nothing I had ever experienced before, and I could feel my heart pounding in my chest as we raced towards freedom.

As we emerged from the tunnel, I could see the sky above us, a vast expanse of deep blue. But before I could take a breath of fresh air, I felt a sharp pain in my side. The last thing I

remembered was the sound of Flare's voice, calling out my name in desperation. And then everything went black. Once I opened my eyes again, I was outside the gate, alone.

As I returned to reality, memories floated around me. Soon, Sam caught up with me and started taunting me again. His eyes widened in surprise, and for a moment, he seemed taken aback. But then he grinned, a cruel glint in his eye.

“Loser! You are here,” he said. “Let's see what you've got.”

Without another word, Sam lunged at me, his fists were flying. I dodged and weaved, trying to avoid his blows, but he was too quick for me. He landed a solid hit to my jaw and I stumbled backwards, dazed.

Suddenly, a sound from heaven rang audibly to my ears, “Just believe in yourself, FIRE!”

It was Flare! My heart pounded faster and faster, I took a deep breath.

“I’ve had enough. I’m not going to take it anymore.” I lunged forward, my fist connecting with Sam’s jaw. He staggered back, surprise written all over his face. I fixed my gaze on him, my eyes blazing with anger and defiance as I stared him down.

“Okay,” he said, holding up his hands in surrender, “You win.”

He slinked away through the gate. I gasped for breath, feeling a surge of pride and satisfaction.

Standing up to a bully can feel like escaping from a trapped cage. Sam seemed unbeatable, and I felt as small as a powerless dragon unable to defend itself. But I took a deep breath and faced him head-on, refusing to back down. My fiery spirit burned bright like the dragon's flames, and I stood my ground, ready to fight back.

With Flare's encouragement, I gathered the courage to shift the power away from the bully. Flare had shown me the true meaning of courage, and together, we conquered our fears. We proved that anything is possible if we have the courage to try.

As the fight ended, I felt a sense of liberation, like a dragon finally able to breathe fire. With newfound confidence, I approached Sam and told him that I wouldn't be bullied anymore. His face turned red with anger, but I stood tall, unafraid.

From that day on, I was no longer a victim. After the adventure, I had learned to breathe fire like a dragon.