

The Dragon of Arcadia

BOOM! *FLASH!*

The wizard, using his staff, launched a combination of jets of flame and blazing balls at the town as the houses smoked and debris puffed up into the air.

“Ha ha!” Asgoth the Terrible cackled as he threw another flaming sphere at the town hall of Arcadia’s capital city, Mirthlorien. The citizens screamed as they fled from the powerful wizard.

Jamie, a girl who had survived Mirthlorien, recalled her troubles. “Oh, Old Willow! What am I to do?” she sobbed to a worn out tree. Old Willow was a kind old thing who had ‘adopted’ Jamie ever since her parents had been killed during Asgoth’s attack on a different, innocent Arcadian city.

“There, there. Don’t waste your sorrows on this. After all, things will get worse.” The tree sympathetically patted Jamie with a branch.

“Get worse?” Jamie shook between wails.

“Yes, get worse,” Old Willow stroked his leafy beard as if he spoke in meaningless words, “Haven’t you heard?”

“What, Old Willow?”

Old Willow gave a deep sigh. “Asgoth is launching a missile. He has boasted that it will kill all of Arcadia, including himself. He is getting old and he is dying. He has vowed to kill, to spill blood including his own, as long as Arcadia is never free again. He’ll be launching his missile tomorrow, at noon.” Jamie gasped in shock.

“Aren’t you scared, Old Willow?” Jamie sobbed angrily, “Look at me, look at you! My home is gone, and you’re getting older!”

“You’re right, Jamie. But I’m going to die anyway, whether of old age or Asgoth’s missile.”

“No!” she cried, “There must be something we can do! If we don’t do something, Asgoth will have us all dead!”

“And how do you propose we, or you, do that?” Old Willow trembled.

“We can’t, unless...” Jamie’s voice trailed away. She gazed off into the distance. Old Willow followed her gaze, and found what she was staring at.

“No! Surely, not,” Old Willow excitedly spoke as he looked at the lake, which was the subject of Jamie’s gaze.

“Yes,” Jamie smiled, “We’re going to get Firefly.”

The next day, Jamie and Old Willow departed to the lake. Old Willow grumpily frowned.

“For this, I had to uproot myself? This path is so – OW!” he shrieked as his knotty roots hit sharp thorns. Jamie ignored him, but held out a long stick, which had a light, woven ball of thin branches. The ball had fire within, lit by Jamie.

“I’m telling you, Jamie. Firefly is nothing but a hard, cold lump of stone wasting away at the very bottom of the lake. I think you’re confusing Firefly with the Dragon of Arcadia, the legendary dragon. He saved Arcadia before,” Old Willow grunted.

“Old Willow, fire is enough to wake him up. You yourself told me that. This stick,” Jamie motioned to the blazing wooden-stick-ball she held above the waters, “Will rouse him. Firefly loves fire. Why do you think his name is Firefly? Besides, Asgoth is no match for him, Firefly is just asleep.”

“But I don’t think –”

WHOOSH!

A red creature burst from the lake, splashing Jamie and an irritated Old Willow with fresh water. As it soared up, it took the ball of fire in its massive jaws. As the creature rocketed back down, two magnificent wings unfolded from its back and stopped its fall.

The scarlet dragon hovered in the air, its eyes burning deeply. His teeth gripped the blazing sphere. Suddenly, he swallowed the ball. Thinking he would die, Jamie screamed. However, Firefly’s skin was illuminated as orange scales glowed on his body. Firefly landed and bowed gracefully. He snorted with a smile as he bowed, as if to say, “At your service.” Jamie climbed up by a wing that Firefly had flattened to the ground.

“Now, to Asgoth’s castle!” she yelled.

At the castle, Jamie sneaked into Asgoth’s secret chambers, where, in the centre, stood Asgoth’s missile. There were items and gadgets surrounding it to

prepare it for launching. A gigantic computer to coordinate the evil plan sat in the middle of the chamber.

Jamie scanned the room, and found her objective. Hesitating a little, she hid Asgoth's magical staff behind the computer, pleased to find that the bright blue glow of the device concealed the staff's emerald illumination. In Asgoth's presence, she showed a copy of his staff that she and Old Willow had crafted.

"Hey, Asgoth!" she yelled, waving the fake.

Asgoth, thinking it was his real staff, madly pursued Jamie.

However, Jamie swiftly hid in an alcove, covered by a curtain. Once Asgoth had passed, cursing furiously, she slipped into his chambers again. She kicked and smashed the gadgets, including the missile. With a confident slam of a button, she disabled the computer programs, then escaped with Asgoth's real staff. Outside, she hopped onto Firefly's back, and the dragon rose into the sky.

Jamie gave an ear-piercing cry.

Immediately Asgoth ran out from the castle, huffing from the chase. Seeing his staff with Jamie, he turned pale.

Asgoth furiously shouted, and armed himself with a nearby guard's shield. Jamie pointed the staff at Asgoth, and Firefly gave a *whoosh* of fire. Asgoth's shield deflected the blue flame onto Firefly's side, but the dragon's rocky skin bounced it back to Asgoth.

The villain gave a shriek. His skin shrivelled up, his body was consumed with flame, and he fell to the ground. His ashes sifted into the soil, and his charred clothes lay neglected.

"Yes!" Jamie cried, "We did it, Firefly!" But Firefly's wounded, burned skin caused him to moan, and the dragon spiralled down and splashed back into his lake. Jamie fell to the ground, then scrambled back up. She frantically scanned the lake for any sign of Firefly. A huge bubble, followed by ripples, satisfied her.

It was then that she knew that Firefly wasn't any dragon, he was *the* dragon, the Dragon of Arcadia.