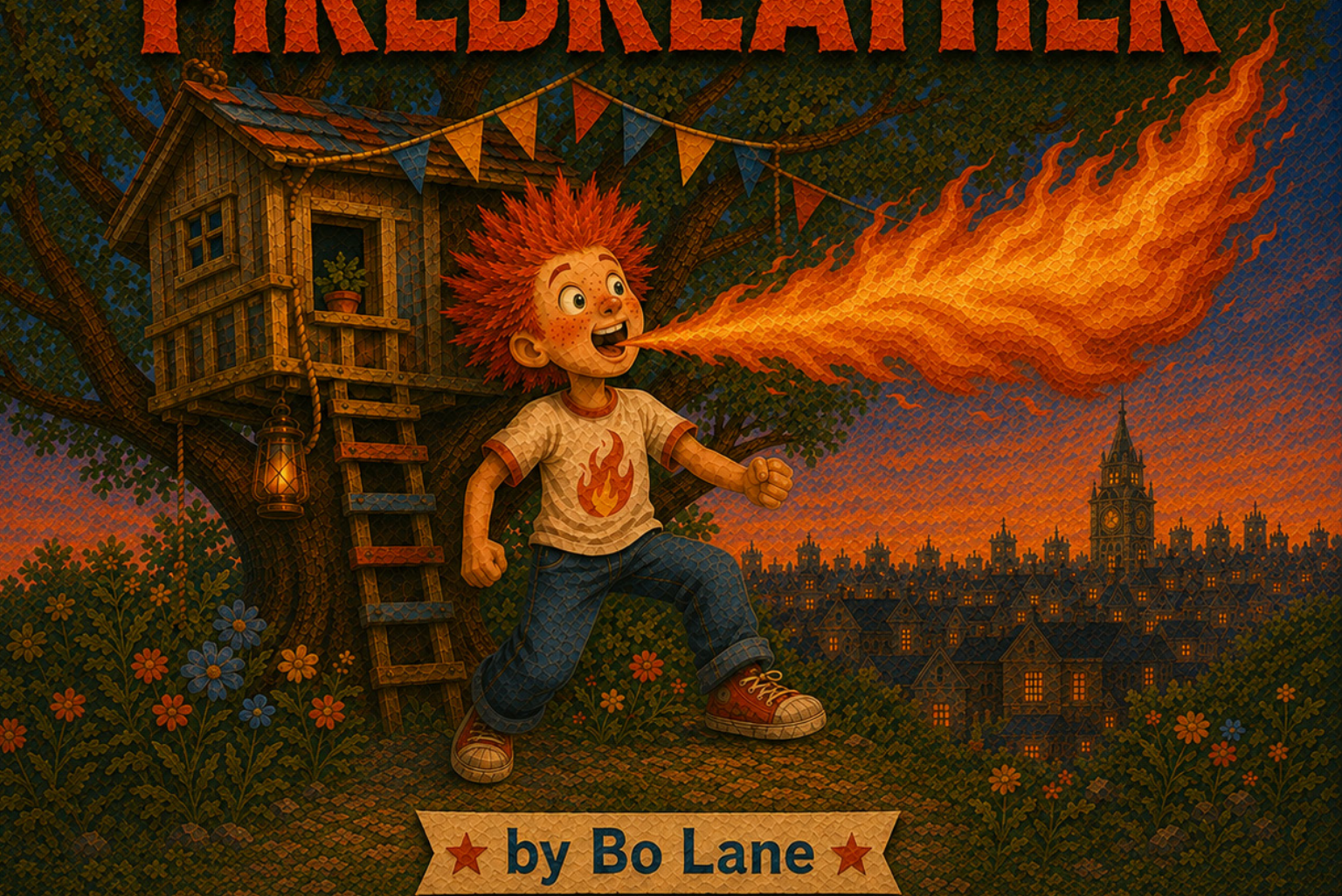


CHESTER FIREBREATHER



★ by Bo Lane ★



Several years ago, in a town similar to this one, a handsome baby boy was born. His father and mother, Mr. and Mrs. Firebreather, were excited to see their son for the very first time. "Well, what should we name him?" asked Mr. Firebreather. "What about Chester?" exclaimed Mrs. Firebreather. "Chester," said Mr. Firebreather as he took his newborn son into his arms. "Yes, I like the sound of that."

Chester was about this long and weighed about that much. His hair was fiery red, as bright as a freshly painted fire truck, and as orange as the noonday sun. In fact his hair was so bright that the doctors gave him quite an unusual nickname, "Fireboy."



The very next day, as Mr. and Mrs. Firebreather took Chester home from the hospital, they noticed something very peculiar. It looked as though Chester, who was just one day old, grew overnight. Mr. Firebreather grabbed a tape measure from his box of tools and measured Chester from head to toe.

“From what I can tell,” exclaimed Mr. Firebreather, “Chester has grown three inches overnight!” Mrs. Firebreather was stunned. “It can’t be,” she thought. “We’ll have to measure him again tomorrow.”

Indeed, Chester did grow. The very next day Mr. Firebreather measured Chester. And, again, he grew another three inches. Each and every day from that point on, Chester grew more and more. He grew and he grew and he grew. And the next thing his parents knew, Chester was one month old ... and he was already walking.



HAPPY 10TH BIRTHDAY
CHESTER!

KNOCK
FOR
ADVENTURE

When Chester turned two months old, he started to talk. All the doctors couldn't explain why he was growing so rapidly but he was. And as the years went by, Chester became taller and smarter than anyone else in his entire school!

It was Chester's tenth birthday and, as he and his friends were hanging out in his very humongous treehouse, his throat started to get a little sore and scratchy. He hadn't been feeling well for the last several days but he didn't think much of it. Only a short time after that, Chester started coughing.



“Are you alright, Chester?” asked Thomas, Chester’s best friend since kindergarten. “I think I’ll be ok” said Chester. But his cough began to get much worse. He felt as if his throat was on fire. “Don’t you think you should tell your mom that you’re not feeling well?” asked Gordon, who lived just down the street by that white house with the green trim. “I’ll be just fine.” said Chester. But Chester wasn’t fine. In fact, just a short while later, Chester couldn’t stop coughing.

He coughed and he coughed and he coughed. And then, when all of his friends in the treehouse were looking at Chester, he coughed ... and smoke came out of his mouth! “Whoa, did you see that?” exclaimed Thomas. “Chester, smoke just came out of your mouth!” The more Chester coughed, the more the smoke came pouring out. Chester started to worry. “What is going on?” he thought.



And then it happened. It would be the last time Chester would ever cough again in his whole entire life. Except this time, when he coughed, there was no smoke. Instead, a giant blaze of fire shot out of his mouth. It was so fiery that it almost caught the curtains, the old brown and orange ones his parents gave him for his treehouse, ablaze. All of his friends were awestruck. Their mouths dropped open.

They couldn't believe what had just happened. Chester Firebreather just coughed fire!



“Well,” said Chester, still confused by what had just happened, “that was weird!” “Don’t you think now would be a good time to tell your mom, Chester?” asked Gordon. “We can’t tell anyone what happened!” exclaimed Chester. “It must be our secret. No one can ever know!” And so, from that day forward, Chester and his friends made a pact that they would not tell a single person what had happened in that ginormous treehouse that day.

Though he and his friends didn’t know it at the time, that moment was the beginning of a new path for Chester. It wouldn’t be until many years later when Chester would understand the importance and power of his new gift. Ten years later, to be exact. In all that time, neither Chester, nor any of his friends, told a single soul what had happened that day. But deep down inside, Chester knew that some day, his secret would be revealed.



Chester, who had just started a new job at that business down on the busiest street in his town, was heading home to celebrate his twentieth birthday at his parent's house. He was pretty excited about tonight because his mom was making his most favorite dessert of all time. Mrs. Firebreather would make homemade donuts only once a year and that was on Chester's birthday. So, as soon as his shift was over, Chester grabbed his coat and headed out the door.



As he started making his way toward his parents house, Chester noticed something strange happening down one of the alleys between two of the tallest buildings in town. The night sky was rapidly approaching so Chester had to squint his eyes to get a better look. To his astonishment, he saw four bad guys, with bats and brass knuckles and nun-chucks, getting ready to beat up some guy and steal all of his money.

Hoping to get a better look at what was going on, Chester took a few steps down the dark alley. And a better look is exactly what he got. Not only did he see all the bad guys, he realized that the scared young man, who was about to get pounced, was a very familiar face. It was his friend Thomas.



Mr. and Mrs. Firebreather had always taught Chester to make good choices. In fact, he never forgot a single lesson his parents or teachers taught him. So, in that moment, Chester knew he had a very important decision to make.

“Leave him alone!” yelled Chester. Even though he was scared, Chester knew that standing up for his friend was the right thing to do. “Thomas would have done the same for me,” Chester thought to himself.

All four bad guys, who started walking toward Chester, began laughing at him. “Ha!” yelled one of the bad guys, “what’s a kid like you gonna do to all of us?”



“Remember the pact, Chester!” yelled Thomas. “Remember the secret pact!” Chester hadn’t forgotten what had happened that night in the treehouse and he surely didn’t want anyone to know his secret. But he knew that in order to help Thomas, and himself, revealing his secret was exactly what needed to happen.

“You better stand back,” said Chester, “I really don’t want to hurt you.” As the four bad guys, who had already gathered around him, started laughing again, Chester began to cough. He coughed and he coughed and he coughed. And the next thing everyone knew, a stream of fire was shooting straight out of Chester’s mouth. It was as fierce and as hot as the sun!



Well, as you can imagine, those bad guys didn't stay around for long. They were no match for Chester Firebreather, the man who breathes fire! They dropped their bats and brass knuckles and nun-chucks and ran away as fast as they could. "You saved my life, Chester!" exclaimed Thomas. "If you wouldn't have come to my rescue, I'm not sure what would've happened!" Indeed, Chester made the right choice. It was a choice that would put him on a new path ... the path of a superhero.

From that point on, Chester decided to do what was right and stand up to all the bad guys in the world. He would use the special gifts he was given to help make the world a better place.

Chester Firebreather
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