



The Red Pencil, a Dragon's Tooth, and the Lost Treasure: A Gratitude Club Adventure

These excerpts may not be representative of the release version as the book is still in final review to ensure its content is most appropriate for its target audience.

Chapter One New Friends

Ridge was new to Thomas Edison Elementary School. Everything felt different and strange.

Suddenly a girl sat down across from him. A girl!

Another boy came to the table.

"My name is Randi," the girl said. "He's Casey. Who are you?"

"Welcome to your new school," Casey said. "Perhaps we could all get together this afternoon."

The kids agreed to meet in a small wooded area.

Chapter Two The Old Tree

The next day, the three friends met by a big old tree at the edge of the woods.

"It would be good," Casey said, "to have a clubhouse to protect us from the weather."

"How fun!" Randi said. "It will be our own special clubhouse!"

Chapter Four A Safe Place

"You know," Randi said slowly, "I like this clubhouse better than the house where I live."

"Lately, everyone seems angry or scared," Randi said. "I don't understand why."

"It's all about money," Randi said.

"Without money," Casey said, "we all get scared. "

"This can be our safe place," Randi said. "A place away from the adult world of not enough money and lost homes. This is our place. We built it and we can keep out all those worries."

Chapter Five A New Way of Thinking

"We all have the same fear," Casey said. "But here we can relax."

"That's what we have to do whenever we feel afraid," Randi broke her pose. "We have to stop."

"It's a new way of thinking," Casey said. "We can use it anytime we feel afraid." We can halt and stay calm."

"Then I can calculate, I can choose," Casey said.

Chapter Nine Letting Go

“I was thinking all weekend about our new way of thinking. I came up with a new name for all the things that worry us.”

Casey stood and cleared his throat. He said, “Sticky issues.”

“When something happens that makes us afraid, it gets all over the place, too. It sticks to all our thoughts.”

“Some sticky issues are big,” Casey said. “But don’t forget about the small ones.” “All sticky issues can make us worry if we don’t know how to think about them.”

“We halt,” Ridge said. “Then we can make a choice.”

“You feel confident,” Casey said.

Ridge thought about what Randi said for a moment. “Well, I just had to move. I didn’t like it but I did it.”

“So you accepted it,” Casey said. “We can use our new way of thinking about sticky issues. We just go step by step.”

“Right!” Ridge said. “If we halt and think, there’s really no reason to be afraid. After we think about a sticky issue, we have choices about how we’re going to feel and act.”

“That’s like deciding how you’re going to feel,” Casey said. “You choose your feelings.”

“And since we’re calm,” Randi said, “we have a safe way to deal with things that are upsetting.”

“Even when you’re facing a big sticky issue.”

“If you stop and think, you can make a choice instead of being stuck,” Ridge said.

“When you accept,” Casey said, “you choose to feel confident. Like you can handle what’s happening.”

“Then what?” Randi asked.

“We can’t just forget about our sticky issues. Big or small, they’re important,” Casey responded.

“That’s our next step! We halt, we accept, and we let go!”

“So if you don’t let go of your sticky issues,” Casey said, “they will annoy and distract you.”

“The tree,” Randi said, “lets go of its leaves so it doesn’t get sick. If we let go, we can get rid of the fear that can make us sick!”

“These steps make our choices seem clearer,” Casey said. “Because we can get rid of the fear.”

“We can feel confident,” Randi said.

Ridge nodded. “It won’t be easy,” he said.

“We’ll have to practice,” Casey said.

Chapter Thirteen Being Open

“So we have to stay open, too,” Casey said.

“Open to new ideas,” Ridge said.

“Less cluttered,” Casey said.

“So,” Ridge said, “when we let go, our minds are less cluttered. We have more room in our heads for different thoughts.”

“We can expand our thinking,” Casey said.

“You mean we can have more thoughts?” Ridge asked. “

“Our sticky issues have been swept away,” Casey said. “And that made our fear go away.”

“We have to be open,” Casey said. “Just like the tree.”

Chapter Fifteen The Blurry Snake

“We’re like the snake,” Ridge said. “As we grow and change, we sometimes feel strange and different. But if we wait long enough we’ll have a new skin.”

“And you don’t need money to grow!” Ridge said.

“You’re right,” Casey said. “We don’t need money. We only need to be open to change.”

Chapter Sixteen A Warm Glow

“Yes!” she said. “It doesn’t matter if we’re in the clubhouse or at school. We can create our own halo whenever we follow the steps. That makes us feel...what did you call it, Casey?”

“Confident,” Casey said.

“We feel confident.” She nodded. “We don’t feel fear anymore.”

“But it’s more than that,” Ridge said. “Following the steps makes me feel happy.”

“So we can face sticky issues and still feel happy,” Casey said. “I like that.”

“Even though there are sticky issues,” Randi said, “I feel happy that I have other things. Good things.”

“That’s called gratitude”, Casey said.

“We have a lot to be grateful for,” Randi said . . .

“You know what?” Randi said. “I’ll bet everybody has sticky issues.”

“Even our parents,” Casey said.

“So we have created our own halos,” Ridge said. “We did all four steps and are surrounded by the glow.”

“The glow of gratitude,” Randi said.

“Gratitude pulls all the other steps together,” Casey said. “It completes all the other steps.”

“It’s also a choice!” Randi jumped up. “We chose to halt and to accept. We chose to let go and be open. Now we can choose to be thankful!”

“I like that,” Casey said. “It’s a powerful choice.”

“Fear can’t touch us!” Randi said. “It can’t get through the glow!”

“Fear,” Casey said slowly, “isn’t something you can touch.”

Chapter Eighteen The Clubhouse Class

“We brought you here today,” Casey said, “to teach you something very special.”

“It’s called HALO.” Randi walked over to the tree trunk and pointed at the drawing of the words. “We have four easy steps that make us happy.”

“The steps make us grateful,” Ridge said.

“Grateful for what we do have,” Casey said, “instead of sad about what we don’t have.”

Chapter Nineteen The Gratitude Game

“Pretending doesn’t mean ignoring your sticky issues,” Randi said. “But we have already made good choices. We let go of the little things we can’t buy anymore. Now we have to let go of the sticky issue.”

“You mean let go of worrying about the issue,” her mom said.

“Yes.” Randi nodded.

“We can’t change the issue,” Randi said, “but we can let go of the fear and be grateful for what we have. If we have to pretend to be grateful for a while, that’s okay. Because while we’re pretending, we will talk about things we really are grateful for!”

“So it’s like playing a game,” her mom said.

“A gratitude game!” Randi clapped her hands. “You think of something you’re grateful for then think of all the reasons why. Then think of another thing . . .”

“It’s a game that never ends,” Randi said. “And we can do it with all our sticky issues. All we have to do is choose to do the HALO process. Then we can’t help but feel grateful!”

“Okay.” Her mom put her halo on her head. “Let’s play the Gratitude Game!”

“Practicing the Gratitude Game helps us build a foundation.”

“What kind of foundation?” Randi asked.

“The more we play the Gratitude Game,” her mom said, “the more being grateful will come to us naturally. That will create a foundation for our attitudes.”

“Attitudes?” Randi was confused. “I thought that was a bad thing.”
 “This is a *good* kind of attitude,” her mom said. “It’s an attitude of gratitude.”
 “An attitude of gratitude,” her dad said, “will help us with our sticky issues.”
 “That’s it!” Randi said. “You do get it! But it takes practice.”

Chapter Twenty The Gratitude Club

“Gratitude is the feeling that we get after we’ve thought of something to be grateful for,” Casey said.
 “And now we get to take it one step further,” Randi said. “We can play the Gratitude Game and build an attitude of gratitude.”
 “Building our attitude of gratitude,” Casey said, “is like planting a seed.”
 “That means,” Randi said, “there’s a tree of joy inside our hearts.”
 “And we can play the Gratitude Game all the time,” Ridge said.
 “Everyone,” Ridge said, “can find happiness if they look for it.”
 “If they’re *open* to it!” Randi said.
 Ridge nodded. “Yes. The Gratitude Game makes everyone open to gratitude no matter what sticky issues they might be facing.”
 “So if you put everything together,” he said, “an attitude of gratitude creates joy and happiness.”
 Ridge nodded. “Yeah. That’s what this new way of thinking is all about.”
 “Just imagine,” Randi said, “what it would be like if everyone knew about HALO and gratitude.”
 “There wouldn’t be any more school bullies,” Casey said.
 “It would be a wave of gratitude,” Randi said, “washing over schools and neighborhoods all across the state.”
 “It would wash over the entire continent!” Casey said.

Chapter Twenty-two A Winter Clubhouse

They didn’t like to think about going for months without their special place but it had to be done. Winter was coming.
 “We can practice our new way of thinking right now,” Casey said. “Instead of feeling bad about closing the clubhouse, we can be open to finding a new place to meet. We can be like pirates exploring new oceans.”
 “Yeah,” Ridge said. “And we already have a compass to show us which way to go. The HALO process is like a compass.”
 “It has already led us in new directions!” Randi said.
 “Our new way of thinking,” she said, “has made us see everything in a new way.”
 “That’s because we’re grateful,” Randi said.
 “The brain uses logic,” Casey said.
 “Brain thinking,” Randi nodded. “At the clubhouse, we learned different kinds of things. We learned about emotions that are good and bad. HALO and the Gratitude Game are all about making your heart warm.”
 “So it’s heart thinking,” Ridge said.
 “Exactly!” Randi said.
 “We all have a place in our hearts for happiness,” Randi said.
 “This heart thinking,” Ridge said, “is better than anything else I’ve ever learned.”
 “It’s stronger,” Randi said.
 “It’s powerful,” Casey nodded.
 Just then, the warning bell rang.