



THE GROCERY CODE 1
BY STAR WRITERS' COLLECTIVE
11/17/24



THE KIDS' CANCER PROJECT
WRITE A BOOK IN A DAY

Parameters Form

Team Details

STATE: VIC

DIVISION: Middle School

SCHOOL/GROUP: Star of the Sea College (BRIGHTON)

TEAM NAME: Star Writers' Collective 1

TEAM ID: 627

Parameters and random words

Parameters

Primary character 1 Judge

Primary character 2 Explorer

Non-human character Canvas bag

Setting Green grocer

Issue Cracking the code

Random words

swept

dazzling

faded

wrinkled

quirky

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Chapter 1

"Please don't leave me at the grocer, Mum!! It's going to be so boring!" Walter screeched, stamping his foot on the grocery store floor, squashing a banana under the sole of his runners in a dramatic declaration.

"Oh Walter you'll be fine," sighed his dad as he pinched the bridge of his nose

"Stop being such a drama queen. We will just be gone for an hour." Walter's mum knelt down to Walter's level. She smiled warmly and tucked a strand of Walter's hair behind his ear.

"Make sure you're on your best behaviour, Walter. No getting distracted," She whispered, her voice sweet but stern. His dad put a hand on Walter's mother's shoulder, as if to back her up. "Yeah champ, you're the man of the store," he said. Walter spoke up with a defiant look on his face.

"But explorers don't take care of shops; they go on daring adventures, take charge and explore the unknown." Walter's mum leant down and said softly, "well, explorers help people and take initiative. this can be your first adventure, just don't let anyone in and we trust you, our brave explorer."

"Tik, Tok, Tik, Tok," Went the clock on the wall of the grocery store. "Out of all the jobs in the world, my parents choose the most boring one, owning a stupid grocery store," thought Walter as he sat at the counter, picking at the hole in his jeans.



Suddenly, the bell of the grocery door rang followed by heavy footsteps approaching the front counter.

"A customer," Walter thought with excitement. His Mum did say to not let anyone in but all of a sudden taking care of his parents' local grocery store seemed much more exciting and way less stupid. He jumped over the counter and ran towards the door as the figure **swept** into the grocery store like a movie star.

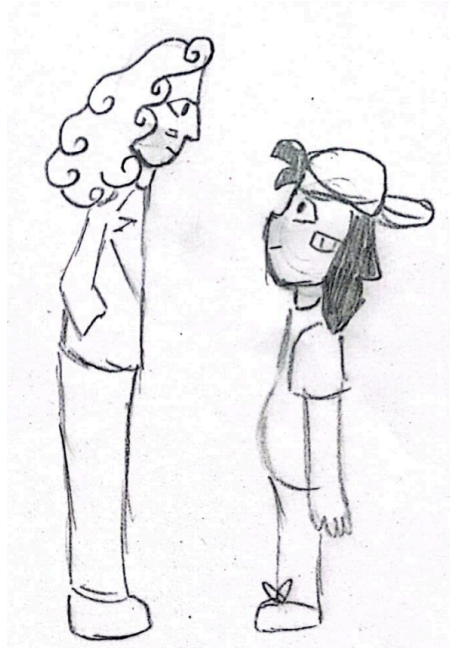
The customer had white curly hair draped over his shoulders.

"His hair looks sort of like a judge's wig," Walter murmured. He wore a black felt trench coat, black pants and shiny black shoes. Underneath his coat you could see a puffy white shirt. He also carried a **faded** white canvas bag over his shoulder, with bold black writing on it which read "I object!" with a picture of a judge's gavel underneath the sentiment. The customer looked Walter up and down, making him feel pretty insecure about the Vegemite stain on his favourite green shirt.

"You're in charge of the shop," he reminded himself, "you got this." He took a deep breath and looked the customer in the eye.

"Hello my good sir," he said. He puffed out his chest and stood as tall as he could, despite his small size. "And who may you be?" The customer responded, playing along with a posh demeanour. "I am Walter George but you can call me Admiral Awesomeness" Walter responded proudly beaming, "and you are?"

"I am Judge Orson. Judge and part time Inspector of establishments that sell and supply agricultural produce,"



Walter stared dumbly at the Judge, eyes wide with his mouth in the shape of an O.

“You’re a what?”

The Judge rolled his eyes,

“Never mind, are you here alone?”

“Yep, I’m the man of the shop,” Walter placed his hands on his hips and grinned blindly towards the dusty can of baked beans on the shelf behind Judge Orson’s horse hair wig.

Chapter 2

“You? The *man* of this... **quirky** establishment that supplies and sells agricultural produce,”

The Judge repeated this to himself, holding back laughter.

“Of course,” replied Walter. Dumbfounded, his confidence slowly slipping away from him.

“Why would me being in charge be so funny?” Judge Orson started to inspect a pink lady apple.

“Well, I mean how old are you? Seven?”

“Ten,” Walter corrected.

“Well, you are much too young to own a business, let alone work, unless this is...”

The Judge dropped the apple and gasped, “CHILD LABOUR! Oh my goodness, this establishment that supplies and sells agricultural produce needs to be shut down immediately!”

Walter’s eyebrows shot up, “shut down the grocery store”? But you can’t, that’s the dumbest thing EVER!” Walter was stumbling over his words.

The judge walked around the shop, inspecting every little imperfection that he could find.

“Hhmm” the judge mumbled picking up a mouldy pear with a look of disgust. “Appalling, revolting. Well this is just outrageous,” the judge said, throwing mouldy fruits over his shoulder. With one shot, the baked bean tin fell in slow motion after being struck in the heart by a rotting pear. Dust fell like mist kissing the floor gently.

Walter stood there appalled as he watched Judge Orson trudge around throwing fruit as he went.

“Y-y-you have to stop,” Walter stuttered. “I order you to stop!”

“*You* order *me*. Respect your elders, boy” the judge scoffed, Walter nodded, plastering a fake look of confidence on his face.

“Let me tell you now that you are nothing but a little boy. I have no quarrel with you. You are no threat to me,” Judge Orson said sternly as he examined a dragon fruit.

“This is the only ripe thing in this shop,” he mumbled to himself.



Walter spoke up, his ears steaming and his face red. “This grocery store is a lovely, respectable shop that my parents own and they left me in charge. Now skedaddle, you evil man!”

Judge Orson slipped the dragon fruit into his canvas bag and pulled out a judge's gavel from behind his bag.

He slammed it on the table with a loud thud as he declared, “This shop is over. No more questions. It's my decision. I'm a judge, you have to listen to me because I am a very legitimate judge.” Orson nodded to himself in reassurance.

Walter's eyes followed the gavel as Orson again slammed it on the counter, replaying it in his brain in slow motion. He looked up, his jaw on the floor next to the baked beans. He was speechless as he scrambled through his brain for words.

“What, why would you do that?” he uttered, flabbergasted, as he thought about what his parents would say.

“This isn't fair!” he cried. As he threw his hands into the air, his keys went flying outside, through the slither of the door that was still open. Walter watched, spellbound in horror as the door swung shut with the keys outside.

“Oh, crap,” he whispered to himself, his face dropping as he glanced over to Judge Orson, seeing if he understood what had just happened.

Chapter 3

“Did that just trap us in?” Judge Orson screamed, panic and fury clouding his eyes.

“This is your fault, boy!” he screeched, feeling as if the walls were closing in. He started pacing and rummaged through the cash register for spare keys, while Walter watched, too stunned to speak.

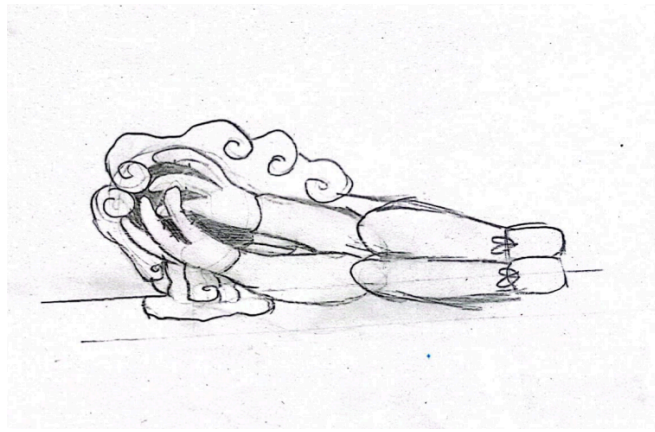
The world seemed to shrink around Orson, collapsing like a house of cards in a sudden gust of wind. It started subtly, with a fluttering feeling in his chest, and a quickening of his breath. His

hands grew clammy, fingers tingling as if electricity danced beneath his skin. It was the first time he'd felt this way, his heart pounded louder and louder, drowning out everything else.

He found a comfortable position tucked away from Walter's prying eyes, sitting with his head between his knees, as he tried desperately to slow his racing thoughts. Memories of past failures and imagined catastrophes flooded his mind, each one amplifying the panic that coursed through his veins.

He fought to breathe evenly, to convince himself that it would pass. Minutes seemed to stretch into eternity as he battled with his own mind. Yet, the fear clawed at him and threatened to engulf him in its cold, suffocating embrace. Finally, like a storm subsiding, the intensity waned. His breaths came slower, less ragged.

He lifted himself to his feet cautiously, causing the room to spin around him, a dizzying carousel of blurred shapes and muted sounds. Judge Orson felt a cold sweat break out across his forehead as his vision narrowed to a pinprick. A wave of nausea rose in his throat, and he grasped desperately for something to hold onto. A sharp ache throbbed at the base of his skull, and his heart, a frantic drumbeat. But it wasn't enough. Darkness encroached from the edges of his vision, swallowing the room whole. His knees buckled beneath him, and he fell to the floor.



Chapter 4

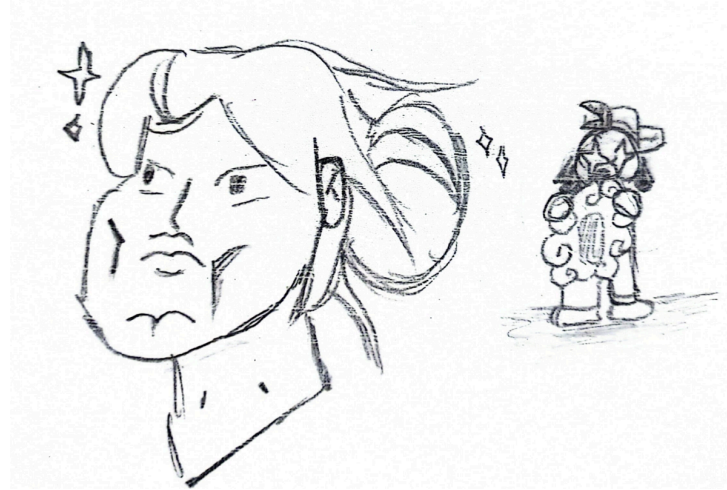
The judge's canvas bag fell with him, and as it hit the ground, a blueberry dragon rolled out. Its tiny eyes opened frantically as it shook its head.

"Hello," Walter whispered in an attempt to calm the creature, "What's your name?"



The dragon didn't answer. It studied him with a look of suspicion visible on its small face. It scrunched its eyes and picked up the canvas bag with a faded 'I Object' printed on it. "Hey, wait! Don't go!" Walter cried out as the blue dragon scurried away. It turned around and blew a raspberry at him, which was slightly ironic since it was a **blueberry** dragon. It looked like it was trying to be fierce, but it just looked adorable. Walter cooed at it and said, "I'm gonna call you Bloo,"

Bloo turned his head in a questioning manner like a dog, with his little ears perking up. He slowly crawled over, canvas bag forgotten next to a box filled to the brim with lemons and limes. Walter cautiously reached out to pat him. Bloo nuzzled his head into Walter's palm; his head was scaly and rough, his horns were miniature yet still managed to curl slightly at the ends. His bright eyes gleamed, even with the lack of light, and scattered away. Walter turned around to see Orson stirring. Walter watched as Orson slowly awoke and arose. "What is that?" Orson grumbled, clutching at his head - no, his hair. The white locks that Walter associated with judges fell to the ground revealing long, golden hair tied up in a tight bun.



"Is that your hair?" Walter asked curiously.

"That's unimportant. What is that creature looking at us? Why does it have my bag?" Orson enquired, gradually becoming more and more stressed.

"His name is Bloo," Walter answered.

Bloo appeared to shy away from Orson's scrutinising attention. He gripped the bag tighter while starting to back away. Orson didn't seem to notice his obvious fear as he yelled at Bloo to give him his bag back. Bloo shook and darted off into the dark, dark aisles. Walter didn't want to go in there, for the shadows crept and stretched, while contorting everything.

"Come, boy, we must retrieve my bag!" Orson declared confidently, stalking off.

Walter didn't follow.

"I thought you said you were awesome? Why do you fear the dark then? Coward," Orson said, rolling his eyes. "Hold my hand if you need to,"

"Thanks," Walter whispered, quietly.

"Let's go, boy," Orson stated, softer than anything he'd said before.

The two of them walked through Greenville Green Grocer, checking every box, shelf, and container, finding more and more baked bean tins on the floor.

"I need to get that bag back. It's from my dad," Orson explained as they entered the storeroom. They both stopped at a terrible sight: three dragons, looming over a canvas bag.

Chapter 5

The first dragon was completely yellow like a lemon, hissing at Walter and Judge Orson. The dragon had hints of green in its scales, its teeth were the size of Walter's finger, **dazzling** white and sharper than knives. In the back, there was a huge dragon towering over the other with an ominous glare. It looked kind of like a dragon fruit. While its back scales were pink, the spikes were fading green, getting darker and darker, its jet black eyes piercing through him. Walter looked down at its menacing purple. It's underbelly white and spotted and pink razor sharp claws gripped the canvas bag.



The dragons stared down at Walter with hunger gleaming in their eyes. He had started to realise that he and Judge Orsen might be their lunch if they didn't get away soon. Trembling with fear, Walter started to whisper to Judge Orsen, his voice shaking. "Um, hey, Judge?"

"Yes Walter," the Judge replied in a steady voice.

"If you want to live you should probably follow what I say."

"Why should I trust you?!"

"Just listen!! Slowly back away from the dragons but keep your eyes on them and then when we are out of their line of sight we make a break for it."

"But what about my bag!"

"You have to leave it!! We'll get it back later, promise."

"Okay, but how do you know they won't chase after us?"

"I don't. I just really, really, really hope they won't"

"Oh that's reassuring."

Walter rolled his eyes. Even in the face of danger, Judge Orsen still managed to be a posh and angry grump.

They backed away slowly, the dragons started to growl but they didn't move. "So far, so good," thought Walter as he continued to step back. Then at the worst possible moment, Walter heard a loud, ear-piercing crunch. He turned around and froze, Judge Orson had stepped on a ripe lemon.

At that, the lemon dragon went crazy, it started flinging its head around, roaring ferociously, and then it laid its eyes dead on Judge Orson and started to charge. "RUN!!" screamed Walter and

right then both him and Judge Orson circled and sprinted with the two dragons and Bloo running after them. Judge Orson turned to see the dragon fruit dragon wearing his canvas bag as a hat. Anger pulsed through him, "We have to get my bag back!!"
Walter looked at Orson with a pitiful look. "I'm sorry Judge but if you try to get that bag, they'll eat you alive!! But I'll stay true to my word; we'll get your bag back! But first we have to find somewhere to hide!"

Chapter 6

Walter's eyes inspected the room like the scanner at the cash register that he is forbidden to touch, as he looked for a way out of this situation. His eyes locked onto the gleaming door handle a few metres away

"There!" Walter exclaimed in a moment of inspiration "The storeroom!" Walter grabbed Orson's hand and pulled him along, running as fast as his short legs could carry him until they reached the door.



Orson fumbled with the doorknob and after three long seconds proceeded to finally open it and tug his younger companion and Bloo in along with himself. He shut the door behind them faster than lightning.



Walter grabbed a broom from the back of the cupboard and propped it against the door for safety, "What shall thou do now?!" he cried in exhaustion as he sat down on a bucket on the floor and put his head in his hands.

"Maybe a plan?" suggested the Judge,

"A plan for what? Running into the dragon's territory again, you stupid idiot?!" yelled Walter who was now turning red in the face,

"Yeah, sure the 'dragons,'" said Orson unconvinced as he paced around the room, Bloo on his shoulder. "Well a plan is the only way we may be able to get out of this." said Orson, "aren't explorers always supposed to have a plan anyways?"

Orson noticed the tears that were welling in his young companions' eyes, his own eyes widening at the sight. Bloo ran up to Walter and started to nuzzle his leg, attempting to comfort him.

Walter picked Bloo up in his arms, cuddling him for more comfort.

"Well I don't have a plan," Walter said amidst the sniffles,"but I might be able to make one."

He then grabbed the hem of his green shirt as he tried to hold his tears back, making his shirt **wrinkled** in the process.

"Well then kid what do we have to do?" Orson asked.

"Well, I have an idea," Walter responded. "We just have to do this...".

A few minutes later, Orson put his hand on the broom and spoke slowly, "but even if we enact this plan we still need a way to find the code."

Suddenly, the faint echo of a voice came from outside the closet.

"I have the coooode save meeeeeee!" Orson jolted in surprise, looking around the room to see where the voice came from. Walter looked at him, concerned "What is it?" he asked,

"Did you not hear that voice..?" Orson asked, looking around frantically "No..?" Walter responded, slightly alarmed.

Orson felt like he was going insane, he swore he heard a voice, why couldn't Walter hear it?!

"I know where the code is!" Orson exclaimed, "Jolly old chap, we may have a plan!" Walter exclaims in excitement as he revives his awesomeness. A few seconds later the door to the room creaked slowly open an inch and out emerged a figure accompanied by two others.

Suddenly a jar of Vegemite rolled over and Orson collapsed to the floor midstep. A few steps away from the canvas bag.

Chapter 7

From the Judge's perspective:

The Judge watched the canvas bag with awe. He didn't question why it could move around so much, he just questioned why it was so annoying.

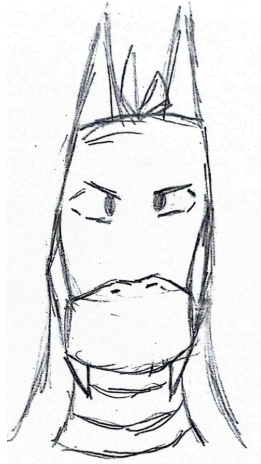
It was stuck, perched on the spike of a dragon fruit. It was just out of reach. Gingerly, Judge Orson got up and strutted over to it casually.

Walter was in the other corner of the store, playing with Bloo. Judge Orson started to wonder where the other dragons were, but his thoughts were interrupted by the Canvas bag. He jumped, trying to retrieve the blasted thing but to no avail.

It was too high. He turned to Walter, beginning to walk over and form a new plan with him when a seed hit the side of his head. It hurt more than a seed should. It certainly caught him off guard. When he turned to look for the source of this unnatural projectile, he was hit with a flurry of tiny black specs. He turned his head around wildly in confusion until a force barreled into him.

“Are you ok? Mr. Judge?” Walter said anxiously.

“I’m fine, boy. What happened?” Orson had rubbed his eyes in confusion but when he opened them he saw a hulk of a beast standing in blistering rage.



He got up and ran, he instinctively made a bee-line to Walter, who he now saw battling a pink dragon with green spikes and a white underbelly with tiny black dots. Walter turned to him, “Mr Judge come and help me! Help me battle Frooto! By the way, Bitterz! And that's Frooto!”

Pointing at the yellow dragon, then the dragon fruit one. He could now see the bag around Frooto’s horns, and he saw Bitterz catching up with him, bright, white claws itching to tear at whatever they could get their hands on.

Orson gulped and took a leap at Frooto, fear racked through him, but he yanked on the bag. Walter joined in, along with Bloo.



The small blue dragon hissed at Bitterz as the medium dragon prowled, waiting for a chance to help large Frooto. With a lot of effort, Orson pried the canvas bag off. He was thrown backwards, but he didn’t care. He had won. He could leave this good-for-nothing store and the kid that came with it behind.

He hugged the bag in celebration. Then he saw Bitterz. The dragon seemed to revel in his celebration, hungry to end it. Bitterz stalked forward and lunged, sharp teeth snagging on the canvas bag. It ripped in his hands. He held on fiercely, but trying to beat a dragon at tug of war is widely known as a stupid thing to try and do. Smooth canvas caught between **dazzling** teeth. Orson struggled to pull himself up, feeling weak. Bitterz handed the bag to Frooto with a smirk. It was still a look of respect, the dragon clearly held Frooto in high regard.

Chapter 8

“Mr Judge Orson! Over here!” Walter cried from across the grocer. Orson nodded and the two of them bailed back to the storage closet.

The two slammed the door behind them, coughing and spluttering. “Everything is going horribly.. what are we doing, Walter...?” Orson sank to the floor, quaking, and leant against the door. Walter caught his breath at the other side of the room, speechless as he gathered himself, utterly shattered. Both individuals were too struck to speak.

Orson fumbled for words then sighed in resignation. *“Do you have anything to say? You're constantly blabbering, go on, what now?”* Orson interrogated. Walter stared at his shoes, defeated. “I-I...” Walter sighed, his resolve fainting quickly, slipping through his fingers like sand. He tried to pick himself up, just as he always had. “...” “...” “Kreeeeen!!!” ?! Bloo paraded around the room, cooing and stamping. “Kreeeeeeeeeeee!!!!” Orson’s brow twitched at Bloo’s constant babbling, he buried his face in his hands. Bloo hesitated, and waddled over to Walter.

Walter watched the small blueberry dragon, envious of its liberty, and obliviousness, Bloo watched back, expression unreadable behind his bright Aquamarine gaze.



“Kree-”

“SHUT UP” Orson snapped at the small creature, it jumped and scuttled behind Walter, peeking out from behind his legs.

“We are locked in here, because of your over-anxious security system, and we can't find the code to get out!” Orson stood up and started to pace around the room.

He mumbled under his breath “-!! Sorry... I shouldn't be getting so worked up...” Orson took a deep sigh and sat back down, clearing his mind.

Chapter 9

Suddenly Walter jumped up with glee, grinning ear to ear and glowing with pride as he declared “I have an idea!”

Judge Orson looked incredibly sceptical and looked wearily at the small boy in front of him. Walter proceeded to race through his explanation of his plan. A few minutes later, the Judge cracked the door open just enough to see a slither of light. After taking a deep breath, Orson

took a calculated step out into the fruit section. Walter felt Bloo nuzzling him and looked down to see him.

“Stay here, it’s okay,” he whispered to the miniature dragon, as he left the room a lot less carefully than Orson before him.

They crept along the aisles and peeked around corners with the use of a mirror, taken from the storeroom, until Judge Orson nodded at Walter and whispered, “Now,” in a voice so low it was hardly heard.

Walter answered with a jerky nod as Orson jogged almost silently in the opposite direction. Walter felt his legs shaking with fear, but he kept walking. He forgot to be quiet as he started to get angry at his parents for leaving him. It felt as though his parents were gone for years. Walter wondered why he couldn’t have come with his parents. He felt his eyes start to well up with tears as he froze in his tracks.

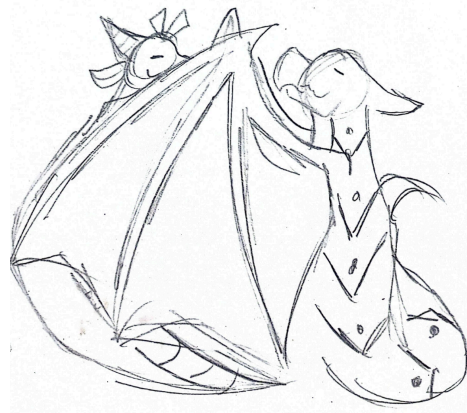
Right ahead of him, there was a massive yellow dragon about the size of him. It was Bitterz, the lemon dragon. Walter felt like he was in a trance, staring at the dragon looming over him. Bitterz turned to face Walter and let out a mighty roar. Before Walter had a chance to run away the dragon spat lemon juice on Walter. Some of it splashed in his eyes and he cried out in pain. Walter heard the dragon’s footsteps coming closer and closer. Walter opened his eyes, and he squinted when he saw Judge Orson standing on top of an aisle with buckets. Walter tried to walk towards the Judge but slipped on the lemon juice on the floor. Walter sat on the floor with his eyes closed in pain, as he hoped that his plan worked as Orson dumped buckets of water on it. Walter’s fantastic plan was to drench Bitterz’s skin in water to wash away the bitterness of the lemon juice, because having lemon juice all over the dragon’s skin would have been very painful. Walter could hear the faint footsteps, and after a second of confusion he realised that it was Bloo.

“No!” Walter called out, “Bloo, get back!”

He didn’t want the tiny dragon to get hurt. Walter stood up and opened his eyes. Through all the panic, he hadn’t realised that the pain from the lemon juice had ebbed away. He looked over at Bloo who stood alone, appearing more delicate than ever, before he looked at Bitterz, who had been soaked from horns to tail with a pool of water all around him. Walter looked down to see water had crept in his jeans.

Walter heard an odd sound; it was Bitterz, who had been purring.

A humongous shape came out of the shadows. It was Frooto! Her towering, red figure was petrifying. Walter had been sure that Frooto was going to eat him, but instead, Frooto ran directly towards Bloo and Bitterz. They then embraced.



Chapter 10

Walter stepped back, a look of pure wonder on his face. "Come on, Mr. Judge!" They were happy! They were all finally happy! His feet splashed in water as he went to join the dragon family. Walter smiled as Bloo cooed at him, his little pet dragon.

Bitterz and Frooto looked at him cautiously at first, but welcomed him in an instant. Frooto offered the canvas bag softly and Judge Orson ran up and grabbed it at once and quickly went searching through the canvas.

After a few seconds his face lit up "Ah ha!" he called and pulled out a piece of paper with a bunch of numbers on it. "The code to the lock!" he cheered but Walter stared at the Judge in confusion, "how did you get the code to the lock of MY family's grocery store?"

The judge looked around, confused, and then his eyes laid on Bloo.

"I have a feeling that a little dragon had something to do with it." Bloo stood on his back claws and unless Walter's eye's had mistaken him, he was pretty sure he saw Bloo blush and scurry away. Mr Judge used the code on the door and stepped back. Walter pushed open the doors to the grocery store, the outside light blinding him. He took a deep breath, "Fresh air, finally!" He thought. He stopped when he noticed a car pull into the parking spot reserved for staff.

"Oh no. " Walter took a breath. During that whole thing his parents hadn't crossed his mind. He let his foot drag along the tile. Dread seeped in.

"Mr. Judge?" he murmured to no answer. "Ah, Walter, there you are, little man!" Walter's father steps out of the car, carrying several shopping bags. Walter ran to the back of the store, where the Judge was playing with Bitterz.

"My- my parents are back." Walter watched the floor. He really didn't want him to go. Mr. Judge was strange, but nice.

"Oh. I guess I should go then- I mean".

Mr Judge looked around the wreckage of a green grocer. "It'll probably be better for you if I'm not here. This was really weird. Even with context."

Judge looked at the floor as well. "Well. Nice to meet you Walter, you'll make a great explorer someday." He and Walter shook hands. "Yeah. You too Mr. Judge."

"Walter! What happened here! Are you okay?"

Mr. Judge nodded and exited the agricultural establishment.

"Yeah. I'm fine mum." Walter raced to the dragons who were chirping around wildly. Bloo clung to his leg. "You guys gotta go! My parents are here!" Bloo chirped in protest as Frooto picked him up and gazed at Walter gratefully. He watched as they morphed into shimmering wisps and wafted away.

"Walter! What have you done! We were only gone for one hour!" One hour? It felt like a whole day! His parents cornered him in anger. "You wrecked the place" his dad hissed.

"It- It was an adventure."

Walter's smile was bittersweet.



An unlikely meeting of a young boy who dreams of being an explorer and a 28-year-old man who aspires to be a judge. These two go on an exhilarating adventure with dragons and a talking canvas bag. They must work together to survive even when their differences in opinions make it hard. But will these two put their differences aside and work together so they can escape?