

BEEES AND DRAGONS ARE BOTH THE COLOUR GOLD



Written by: Shania Desouza, Helen Hong, Hannah Lee, Sabrina Lee, Marsha Lenin, Suha Shahzad, Zoha Shahzad

Illustrated by: Hannah Lee, Sabrina Lee and Helen Hong

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PARAMETERS FORM		in a Day Science Solutions. Survival.	
TEAM DETAILS			
STATE:	VIC		
DIVISION:	Upper School		
SCHOOL/GROUP:	Box Hill High School (BOX HILL)		
TEAM NAME:	CODE READ		
TEAM ID:	207		
PARAMETERS AND RANDOM WORDS			
Parameters		Random words	
Primary character 1	Courier	Whistle	
Primary character 2	Bookkeeper	Light	
Non-human character	Dragon	Gold	
Setting	Maze	Hungry	
Issue	The night the lights went out	Bubbly	

CHAPTER 1: Young Legacy, Old Lady

Lachie was aware of the fact that he hadn't had the best night's sleep- but when the cardboard box in his hands *moved*, he wondered if he had slept at all. How long do you have to be awake before you started hallucinating? Because it was either the severe lack of sleep, or someone had slipped something into his morning coffee.

Casting the thought aside, Lachie raised his head and marveled at the vintage brickhouse in front of him; 'modest' probably wasn't the word he'd have used to describe it. With its elegant walls and its immaculate front garden, it seemed like something you'd see on a fancy postcard from Europe. Yet, it fit strangely well against the green and brown backdrop of all the eucalyptus trees.



With a huff Lachie set off; a week on the job and his shoulders were already stiff! His hands were calloused from the death grip he kept on his bike handles to avoid being snatched by the wind and propelled into oncoming traffic. He made another useless attempt at smoothing out his hair to look presentable. He pulled the gloves off his hands with his teeth, filing away the risk of impending blisters as something to fret over later.

'Focus, Lachie, focus!' He softly reprimanded himself.

He had only just started working for his dad's courier business, but honestly? It was more terrifying than any other job he ever had. This business, it was his father's dream. His father's legacy. And this delivery job? It was his first major gig, major in the sense that he had to travel for more than a half hour to deliver his packages. *Major* in the sense that it was his chance to prove himself to his father.

'Make me proud Liang Guang, la. Show me you my son.'

His father's broken English failed to make him chuckle this time. Instead, the solemnness beneath those words reverberated through his body. His father was depending on him. And he couldn't, *wouldn't* let him down.

Lachie stood at the heavy-set door that separated him from the last client of his day. The sun was sinking steadily into the ground and Lachie wanted to be as far away from this place as possible before it got dark. All he needed was one more signature, how hard could it be? He gathered whatever courage he had and drew himself up to his full height before he took hold of the koala-shaped door knocker and rapped it against the door. For a moment, the only sounds were his heartbeat and a distant kookaburra. Then he heard a soft 'thud-thud-thud' approach him.

The sound grew louder and louder, as the person on the other side got closer and closer but, oh. So. Snail. Slow.

His heart thumped furiously, and he was on the verge of hyperventilating.

'Get a grip, Lachie!'

His attempts to reassure himself fell on deaf ears however, and he had no time to compose himself as the door swung open.

At the sight of the woman in front of him, his jaw dropped to the ground, but it was neither her greying, curly hair, nor her pale, wrinkly skin that shocked Lachie.

No, what shocked Lachie, was this 5-foot nothing, octogenarian had what he was sure was murder in her eyes and a cricket bat in her hands. A cricket bat which she was currently swinging towards him with surprising strength.

CHAPTER 2: The Little Dragon

Lachie hastily thrust the writhing package in the direction of the woman, just as she begun to bring the bat a little too close for comfort. At the sight of the parcel, she slowed.

‘Good God, ma’am! I just came to give ya this parcel. I’ll be on my way as soon as possible!’

He let out a strangled gasp at the end of his sentence and tensed in anticipation of the blow that was sure to befall him.

Suddenly she halted the trajectory of the bat, held above her head as she smiled.

‘G’day sonny, I dint mean to frighten ya! Y’know how some blokes are round ‘ere. The name’s Florence- Florence the friendly local beekeeper!’

Her voice was sing-song-sweet, almost too sweet. Like honey. Lachie reluctantly shrugged it off as an overreaction from all that adrenaline. Old women weren’t dangerous, right? Certainly not ones that just reach your torso.

‘How ‘bout a bit a supper before you leave, eh? All this work must make ya **hungry**. Just drop the parcel here, honey.’

She gestured vaguely towards the door before ushering Lachie deeper into her tastefully decorated abode.

Lachie didn’t want to be here. He felt there was something she was concealing behind her **bubbly** exterior. And Lachie didn’t like not knowing what it was. Florence navigated Lachie towards the kitchen where she gestured energetically towards a table, Lachie would have protested but all warnings of ‘stranger-danger’ dissipated in his mind. On the table was a feast fit for a ravenous sort of crowd that usually gathered for a test match. Sausage rolls, meat pies, lamingtons, fairy bread and chocolate cake that Lachie suspected was from the Woollies dotted around the neighborhood.

‘Eat till ya heart’s content sweetie. It’s all for you.’

Still a bit wary of her presence, Lachie cautiously reached out to grab a pie. The salty and meaty filling against the flaky pastry satiated a hunger that he didn’t even know existed. The remnants of the day faded away as the afternoon **light** was replaced by the eerie darkness that nighttime always seemed to bring. Just as Lachie put the last of his meal into his mouth, the silence was bought to an abrupt end with a bang, followed by a cry from Florence.

‘OH GOODNESS ME! IT ARRIVED TODAY. THE DARN CREATURE ARRIVED TODAY!’

‘A creature?’ Lachie thought. In all his experience as a courier delivery boy which, to be fair was not much, he had never expected to deliver an exotic animal, let alone something alive. Stunned by this sudden development of events in a day he would much prefer had been typical, Lachie scrambled to the front of the house. And promptly scrambled right back when he came face to face with whatever ‘it’ was.

Soul-splitting, beady eyes stared back at Lachie. Their verdant green contrasted exquisitely with the smooth **gold** scales that covered its body. Leathery wings stretched out to topple a vase and sharp talons dug scratches against the wooden table. Maybe Lachie really did just need a nap. A nap and maybe even a therapist. Dragons weren’t real. They weren’t real and somehow; he could see one sitting right in front of him with smoke pouring out of its nostrils.

Lachie wasn’t proud of it, but he screamed shrilly, ‘What in the *world* is *that*?’

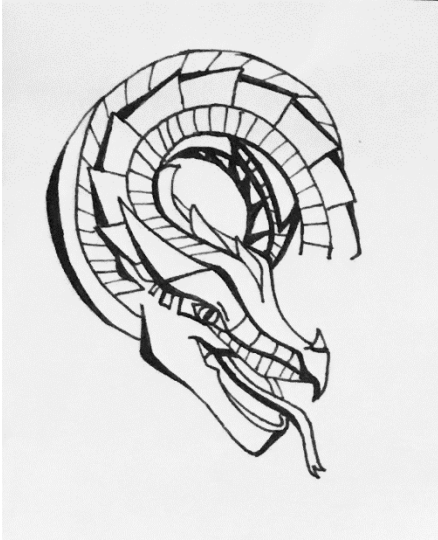
‘Ah, um, well, technically it is a dragon-’ Florence muttered sheepishly.

‘*Technically?*’

Oh God. Oh God. Oh God, it was *moving*!

Lachie was trembling, his brain and his body and his mouth beyond function. Lachie should have hightailed out of here the second he dropped off the box. He should have left when he had the chance.

Florence sighed. Like it was all just some minor inconvenience and picked a broom stick. Before Lachie could worry about her intentions, the dragon scuttled straight out through the door.



CHAPTER 3: The Journey Begins

If Lachie wasn't afraid of his mother scrubbing his tongue out with soap, he would have unleashed a litany of curse words that would've made even the most sea-hardened sailor blush. But mama raised a gentleman, so he had to settle with good god.

That was a *dragon*. As in a vicious, fire-breathing, man-eating, devil's-spawn, fairytale type DRAGON.

Lachie followed Florence, the supposedly friendly-local-dragon-buying-beekeeper around the corner of the estate, only to find said dragon torch an innocent wattle tree.

'Lady, start talking.'

Lachie forced out, eyeing her menacingly.

'I haven't the slightest clue as to what ye mean, love.'

Florence said in that sing-song-sickly- sweet voice.

'Really, dragons are that common place for you? Bet you do Dragon bingo nights every Tuesday and Thursday, huh?'

'It's complicated...'

'Oh, I've got time, alright!' Lachie interrupted.

It's not that the dragon was big, it had the stature of a large cat. It was small enough that it's walk wasn't so much as a waddle. But that didn't slow it down at all, Lachie realized as it crushed half the flowers in the garden bed without so much as a second look.

'Well son, the bees I keep aren't all that regular, ya hear? They have certain...' she paused and leant on her broom as she searched for the right word, 'requirements.'

Lachie thought he was dying. He figured the shock of it all would take his heart. Just seeing the dragon gnaw on its tail took a clean 20 years off his life expectancy.

'Elaborate,' Lachie wanted to say his voice was steady, but that'd be a lie.

'My bees are special.'

'*Special how?*'

'Oh, you know love, they glow, nothing out of the ordinary.'

Clearly, Lachie was wrong when he thought that a very small, very pointy, very fiery, dragon was the most surprising thing he would encounter that day. Because when he turned his gaze towards where the old woman's crooked, boney finger was pointing, his eyes landed on a glowing beehive. Tiny golden sparkles illuminated the hive, circling it, ducking inside, only to slip out again. Lachie always thought of bees as tiny flittering pain-needles. If Lachie wasn't experiencing such abject horror, he might have felt awe. But between glowing insects and an imminent fire hazard, the threat to your life had to take priority.

The entire eastern wall of Florence's home was blackened. The garden was a mess of dirt, trampled plants and scorched grass. And Florence was just watching. When she caught Lachie staring, she just smiled and said something about difficulty before ease and storms and silence.

'Florence, I don't think you're following here, why do your glowing bees need a fire breathing dragon?'

Lachie asked, enunciating very clearly.

'All's well that ends well, love.'

Lachie didn't think he was that type of person but in that moment, he might've assaulted an elderly woman.

He watched her wave it away from her plants with her broom, another two shrubs went up in flames, before the dragon suddenly froze, gaze locked on something beyond Florence. And then it was gone in a flash of green and **gold** and bright red.

'No!' Florence roared, with a volume Lachie didn't think possible. She brought the broomstick down upon the dragon-sized blur but missed. She threw the broom after it, but by then the dragon had already reached its objective. The hive. Florence ran as fast as her arthritis ridden legs could carry her. After a moment's hesitation, Lachie followed. But they were too late. The dragon snatched the hive up into its jaws and fled into the darkness, taking the glow of the bees with it. Around him, the lights went out.

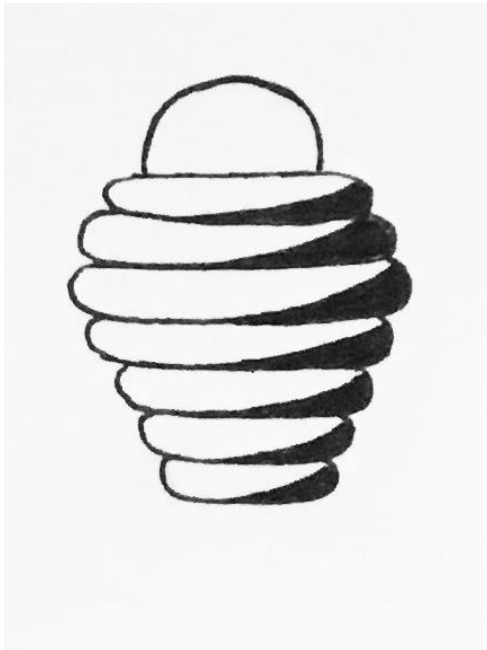
At that moment, Lachie realized just how dark it was. The sky was starless, and the moon was obscured among the hazy clouds. The ground was pitch black. Maybe the dragon took some of the air's warmth too, because Lachie found himself shivering. The lights from the house seemed very far away, but what's worse was that Florence was gone.

Lachie spun around and saw Florence striding towards the dragon. Towards the dark. Was she out of her mind?

'Wait!' Lachie fumbled with his flashlight and stumbled after her.

'Are you insane! You don't even know where it went!'

'Sure, I do darling,' she lifted her hand, 'the maze.'



CHAPTER 4: The Maze

They stood. Frozen. Trembling in awe at the expanse laid bare beyond them. Endless possibilities of twisting, turning pathways. The night sky a blight, demanding dominion over the labyrinth. Lachie shivered at the thought of a journey through a maze he could barely see a meter into. But for all his fear, Florence stood unaffected. She huddled from age, not fear and was moving before Lachie had a chance to blink.

She nudged Lachie and pointed at the edge of the cliff. He looked to where she was pointing and almost laughed.

‘You want me to climb down?!’

As Florence answered with a nod, Lachie stared at her searching for any signs of humor or sarcasm. It took him a moment to realize she was more than serious.

He walked to the cliffs edge, a dizzying height. Through the dark surrounding him he couldn’t see the ground. But he thought of his father and the burning need to complete this job and set off anyway. The climb was slow and painful. His hands were coated in sweat and dirt. His arms were straining, his legs were shaking but he finally reached the bottom. He collapsed in a heap.

‘Get up, we don’t have time to nap.’

Lachie groaned, and then a thought popped into his head. He stared at Florence.

‘Wait, how did you get down here so fast?’

‘Oh, an old lady knows her ways. You don’t expect me to hurt my back do ya?’

Lachie stared at Florence before banging his head on the ground. Dirt on his face he looked back longingly at the top of the cliff. Back towards home.

‘I climbed down that for nothing?’ He murmured.

The edge of her lip raised up and her eyes twinkled with mirth.

Without another word she turned and started down the stone path. He was scared to follow but the fear of being left alone was stronger, so he scrambled after her. Catching up, he finally got a chance to take in his surroundings. His shoes crunched on the reddish sand that covered the ground and the scent of dust and eucalypts assaulted him. Small shrubbery popped up here and there, like sheep in a grassy field.

He was forced to a stop behind Florence and realized they had reached a fork in the road. Thick metal walls split their path. Lachie watched Florence study both paths before nodding at the left in approval.

‘There it is,’ she declared, pointing to something on the ground. It was translucent and **gold**. Lachie bent down and poked it, the mysterious substance sticky to touch. He looked up at Florence and grinned.

‘It’s honey.’

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Lachie trudged after Florence’s hobbled form. The path they had taken took them through drooping foliage and cracked earth. If possible, Lachie thought it was even darker here, he could hear every bug and every rustling leaf and each

crunch of their feet on the ground. He was still unsure how Florence could barge through unaffected, flinging away branches with her frail wrinkled hands. No reservations about invading the night and its shadow filled world.

They had not found more honey; their trail was dead. Lachie didn't think he could make it back if he tried. But Florence kept walking, and so did he. He thought of his father. His dreams. He thought of how angry and confused Florence made him feel. He thought about tiny dragons and glowing bees. He thought about sore backs and blisters and motorbikes, and naps.

'Florence, what is this place?' Lachie asked

'A maze.'

'Are you being obtuse on purpose?'

'It is a maze built by my ancestors.'

'Did they come here as settlers?'

Florence threw her head back and laughed.

'Convicts actually, my great-great something-or-another granddad stole some sheep,' she said with a mischievous smile.

'Scandalous.' Lachie deadpanned.

He was thinking of something else smart to say when they came to a stop in front of a huge metal gateway. It was overpowering and authoritarian, looming ominously. Something about it made Lachie think it would not give even if he asked really, nicely, with a cherry on top.

'So, do we just push hard, or....'

'Uh-uh love, it's no matter of getting through. It has to let us through.'

Lachie didn't reply, he knew by now Florence had something up her sleeve. She grinned, the creases around her eyes prominent, her dentures exposed. Puckering her lips, she raised her head. Letting out a clear piercing sound, she let the **whistle** silence the world around her.

As Lachie watched the animals carved into the frame, began to turn and twist, dancing around a flame in thoughtless revelry. But as that single note reached a crescendo, the animals fell, hackles raised, teeth bared, spittle flying. They turned upon each other, teeth sunk into flesh, claws cut paths in fur, and their revelry became a feral bloodbath. Their blood, stark and silver, coursed between crevices, but Florence paid no mind. She opened the door and slipped inside. Lachie, horrified, had no choice but to follow.



CHAPTER 5: A Misunderstanding

‘Hold up kid.’

Florence halted in her footsteps and proceeded to survey the ground. She fell onto her knees at the base of a puddle filled the substance identified earlier. She touched the puddle of shimmery **gold**. She muttered something incoherently and reluctantly put her finger to her mouth.

Lachie turned to look at her expression, perplexed by her strange actions. It’s almost like... she found something? Then, as though a switch flicked in her head, she shot up, grabbed Lachie by the arm and continued the journey at a noticeably faster pace.

‘More honey. That means the dragon was ‘ere! Judging by the direction of the honey, I reckon it went that way!’

She gestured forwards, towards a section that was comprised mainly of dead leaves and twigs. Typical of a maze, wasn’t it? The bizarre thing was that it emanated a phosphorescent glow. Lachie gasped.

‘He’s in there,’ She whispered. ‘We must go. Now.’

Lachie sprinted towards the glowing mound of leaves, with Florence close behind. He didn’t need her help anymore. Capture the dragon, get Florence’s signature, and that was another successful delivery for the day, wasn’t it? He stood boldly at the entrance to the hedge. *This is it. It’s nearly over.* Peering through the hedge he let out a sigh as his eyes met the mass of lustrous scales. He wasn’t sure how to react. They had done it. The delivery was complete!

He turned towards Florence, who was slowly approaching the dragon. The creature watched her wearily, unsure how to react. Lachie followed it; the dragons uncertainty reflected at him. His eyes narrowed at Florence. What was she...? Suddenly he saw a flash within the dark cave. A KNIFE. She had a KNIFE! What was she going to do? Hurt it? Kill it?

His earlier relief boiled into a bout of rage. He flew at Florence. Turning around, she took a step back, to avoid his fearsome fury.

‘I thought there was something wrong with you! You don’t care about this dragon. You’re not some kind lady who just randomly gives out tea to strangers.’ He screamed.

Florence cocked her head and stuttered, surprised.

‘Ah love, but I did give you...’

Lachie shook his head violently.

‘No, no. You are cruel. You forced me down a *cliff*. You swung a *cricket bat* at me! You made those creatures on the door to *kill* each other! And now? You want to take that dragon and *hurt* it! It’s afraid of you. *Look* at him! He doesn’t want to be near you! He wants to be his own dragon but you’re just forcing him. Maybe he *doesn’t* want to go with you. Maybe he *doesn’t* want to listen to you. Maybe he *doesn’t* want to feel responsibility over some legacy and *doesn’t* want to make you proud.’

The torrent of thoughts became unstoppable. The dam burst open. A Pandora’s box of pent up emotion was released.

Florence edged closer to him with her hands raised up in caution.

‘I don’t think you’re talking about the dragon anymore, sweetie.’ she whispered.

Lachie felt the strength and tension flood, drowning him. As Florence grew nearer, Lachie gave way and fell to his knees

'I feel...pressured,' he admitted.

'I wish my father would let me be who I want. Let me hang with my friends, and study and go out instead of taking on the family 'legacy'. He hasn't once asked me if I want to do this, you know? And now I feel like it's too late to tell him no, and I don't want to hurt him, and I don't want to deliver stupid packages!

'It's too much,' he sighed, defeated.

He felt a smooth surface nudge his cheek. Lifting his eyes, he came face to face with the vivid green eyes of the little dragon. Like a cat, he purred, concern filling his eyes. Lachie drew a watery smile. Tentative, he reached up and patted the creature's head, in between its ears. Surprisingly, it reacted gently, pushing its head up towards his palms, and murmuring with satisfaction.

Lachie couldn't help but smile at its display of affection. Eyes furrowed he turned to Florence.

'What were you going to do to it?' he spat.

She held her hands out, palms towards him.

'Nothing, nothing. You have misunderstood.'

She showed off the shiny bell within her hands.

'This? This is no knife. It's my bell. See, I need something to encourage him to herd the bees. Otherwise he'll just steal the honey and run off. Like he did today.'

Lachie watched her with confusion.

'What do you mean?'

'Ah, everyone knows that dragons are the best breed for beekeepers. Best protectors. Loyal to the **gold**.'

Lachie looked down at the creature, snuggling in his lap.

'But I thought you...'

'Will hurt it? No. Of course not. Who d'ya think I am?'

She grinned toothily.

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With a little nudge and coaxing, Lachie drew the beast from its nest, luring it out to the open. Florence followed behind; hive tucked securely within the folds of her clothes.

As they made their way back through the maze, the dragon happily prancing along, Lachie looked up into the sky. Wide open black, dismal and scary in their journey before, seemed to provide him with a sense of solace. The void, seemingly nursing his aches, thanking him for his delivery. As they made their way through thick under bush and rocky cliffs, they were greeted by minuscule insects and their harmonious melody.

Tiny creatures, glowing in the night, their bodies black and yellow. Companions in the final stretch of their journey, Lachie found they were not as scary as he once thought. They weren't vicious swarming beasts, but placid creatures, little treasures lighting their way home. The dragon was joyous for the company, leaping around and guiding them into clusters before prancing away and watching them fly free. The sky swirled, bright as the sun poked his head in the

horizon. And just like that, their journey ended. A boy and an elder. A courier and a beekeeper. A dragon and a swarm of bees. The sun watched them as they arrived at back at the old woman's house, the **light** restored as dawn finally broke.

'Success is in the hands of those who want it.' Florence had said before Lachie turned to leave.

Obviously, she has eaten her fair share of fortune cookies...

Lachie got on his motorcycle, rearing to go back home. Ready to tell his father that no, he didn't want to be a courier. No, he didn't want to be the one to have all the pressure in passing on the family legacy. He was ready to do what he wanted to do. But Lachie knew he would always make his father proud, with just a little help, of course from the bees and dragons, honey and little old ladies. Who knew they were both the color **gold**?

Lachie, a simple courier striving to prove himself worthy to his father. Florence, the neighborhood beekeeper, holding onto a secret. A seemingly normal delivery, which leads to a quest like no other. Witness the collision of their worlds and the ensued chaos, which is nothing short of legendary!



