

Name:

Grade:

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## Dragon Sized Food Poisoning

Gustav the dragon did not usually find himself without solutions when it came to building. He was used to being busy, and especially when developing an assignment from his friend Anton the fox, things used to work out quite well. But this time it was different, although the plans for Mr. Beaver's house were precise, the smell inside was disgusting due to some leaks that, despite the great knowledge in construction they both had, did not stop appearing.

The only thing that made his day was the beautiful tanned leather wallet he had bought upstream a few days ago. Now everyone in the area was wearing fine leather garments thanks to the factory that had been installed, and that not only gave discounts to neighboring inhabitants, but also brought well-being and work for everyone. The dark leather of this wallet contrasted beautifully with its reddish skin, and no matter how worried he was about the beaver's house, every time he looked at this tiny detail that could seem insignificant to others, he was happy at least for a few seconds.



He was burning wood with the flames of his mouth, being very careful not to spread the fire, making ash to mix with the cement. He would apply different resins for the new water filtration that appeared. Gustav was hungry, making fire consumed a lot of energy, and he was famous for his appetite. When he finished making the ashes, he walked to the river and took great gulps of water. Then, he took his rod and spent a lot of time trying to catch some fish, it wasn't easy, and when he was finally able to quench his hunger he was exhausted and fell into a deep sleep.

Gustav dreamed of a tiny bug with sharp claws and a sting on its tail that ran through his body. It got into each of his organs and made him feel a lot of pain. Sometimes, it peeked out through his belly button, made a wicked grimace and went back into his guts. At a certain moment, when it came out, it showed his beautiful wallet that had become tiny like the same bug, who had stolen it and laughed mockingly.

He woke up agitated and sweating, he touched his belly button in despair and despite realizing that everything had been a dream, he still felt a sharp pain in his stomach. He got up and went to the bathroom, he had a running belly and he felt worse and worse.

After three sick days, the beaver began to get scared. He kept Gustav hydrated, but the poor dragon couldn't eat anything. He had lost several pounds, but he was still too

heavy to take to a doctor. Gustav wrote a sad and scared letter to his friend Anton telling him everything that was happening to him about his illness and the house, hoping that his intelligent friend could, as always, help him out of all his doubts.

Upon receiving the letter, Anton could only jump to one conclusion. But being meticulous and thorough, he didn't dare even say it out loud being alone in his own home. He needed to do tests and analyze them, but for that he had to get samples and clearly Gustav was not in a condition to travel. The fox hated leaving his house and spent the whole night awake thinking on ways to do the necessary analysis without leaving his cave. He thought and thought, he drew up unfinished plans and random routes. But none could be done in enough time to save his dragon friend's life. There was only one option left, he had to travel himself.

He left his house with an old suitcase and a lump in his throat. His stomach tightened in fear and he had not been able to have even a cup of tea for breakfast. With a tangle of mixed emotions, he walked with the firmest and most determined steps he could fake. He asked for a transport from his cell phone that took him to the river, there he took a boat and arrived at the great port. From there he had to walk several hours to find the new train station that led to the leather factory. Upon arrival, the fear had evaporated almost completely, but the long hours without food or sleep made him terribly peckish.

Gustav could not believe his eyes and thought he was indeed hallucinating due to his illness. He knew Anton well and knew what it meant for him to come to this place so far from his little cave. Deeply moved, he shed a huge tear from his eye. Anton wasted no time; he rejected with an unpleasant gesture the water and fish offered by the beaver, sat next to the patient and went to work immediately. He checked his pupils, his gigantic tongue and his temperature. He took the ashes that the dragon had made before falling ill, put them on a piece of cloth and began to filter water. Then he boiled it while with some pieces of paper that he had brought in his suitcase he measured the PH of the water.

Everyone looked at him in silence, some even held their breath to avoid making noise and quickly got off the fox's path as soon as they saw him coming. Anton seemed to not even notice their presence. He worked non-stop and constantly shook his head to clear his tired mind.

Finally, he stopped, read his notes and took off his glasses. He scratched his eyes gently and sighed.

"Phosphorus levels are very low, while Kendall total nitrogen is at scandalously high levels. The chemical oxygen demand, although I cannot know at this point whether it is biodegradable or not, cannot sustain life much longer. I found signs of cyanide, phosphates and nitrates, clear signs of agricultural



and industrial pollution. Finally, there are some organic compounds that I found floating in the river, including phenols, which already begin to spread that mild but unpleasant smell in the environment.”

They all remained silent, too shy to express that, although they had listened to everything carefully, they had not really understood the meaning of his words. Finally, poor Gustav moved awkwardly and asked:

“And well, will I be saved?”

“Of course! You will, but I don't know if the river will have the same fate. You should only hydrate yourself with filtered and boiled water, to which you must add a mixture of salts that I will prepare. You should not eat fish or anything that comes from the river because it is too polluted to be used. In fact, nobody should drink this water. It is likely that your bodies, by consuming this water little by little from the beginning of its contamination, are dealing better with its deterioration, but I can assure you that you will not be healthy for long.”

Finally, the prediction that the fox feared verbalizing so much in his beloved cave was proven. The leather factory was polluting the river with all the industrial tanning processes. In addition, with the high need for skins, the amount of farms had increased the use of agrochemicals and biological waste on the riverbank. It was also probable that the acidity of the water did not allow Mr. Beaver built walls strong enough in his house to avoid leaks.

On learning this information, the inhabitants of the river felt a great contradiction. They understood that they could not allow the river to continue being polluted. In addition, they had always been bothered by the amount of cows that had to be slaughtered at the factory for leather production. But they also realized the well-being that the factory had brought them in their daily lives, giving them work and wealth.

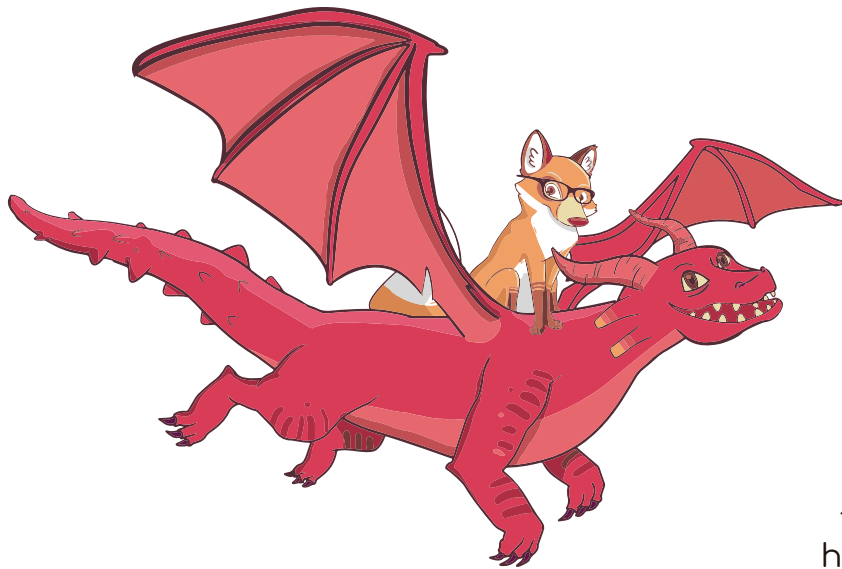
Fortunately, the cunning fox came prepared with solutions. He brought different written articles, some by himself, about alternatives to leather. Being a fox with a beautiful coat, since childhood he had been panicked at the possibility of being hunted and skinned to become someone else's coat. Because of this, he knew processes that allowed making pineapple, coconut and teak leaf leather. However, they were in a very high and cold place for both pineapple and coconut and the forest was too thick to grow teak.

At dinner, they enjoyed a delicious mushroom soup, the specialty of the area. With a full belly and seeing his friend Gustav getting better and better, Anton finally had a great idea. He spent hours researching on his tablet until he found an article written by Phil Ross that explained how to make mushroom leather. It was perfect: biodegradable, sustainable and allowed to make all sorts of designs. In addition, in the dense forest that was around the river, mushrooms were abundant in types and sizes.

Everyone was incredibly excited. They started making plans and brought the factory owners together to show them the harmful effects of their production and to invite them to innovate with this new way of making leather. The process was slow and Anton, not used to being with so many people, became increasingly melancholic. It was not



easy for the factory owners to change what they had been doing for so long. It took many meetings, arguments, discussions and considerations to convince them that the change was inevitable, and that the river community could not accept anything different.



During this time, Gustav made a full recovery and, seeing how bad his friend was having it, offered to take him back to his forest. Anton was very much afraid of flying, but considering his options, he understood this was the best choice. So without much haste, they said goodbye to everyone. Anton was sure he would not return to such a far away place, but Gustav promised to be back as soon as he could to help them execute their project.

The dragon was deeply moved by the solidarity of his friend, who hated leaving his cave and had never even considered traveling outside his forest. He flew calmly, without doing pirouettes and avoiding strong winds. He no longer only admired the fox's cunningness, but had now discovered that he had a gigantic heart. He wanted to somehow thank him and when Anton told him how he could help him, he couldn't stop yet another huge tear from escaping him.

They reached the cave and the fox showed him the design of a practical and interesting cave. They gathered the materials and went to the big rock that marked the end of the forest. There they found the sorceress Mae who was absorbed in her readings. Among the three of them, but mainly Gustav, they dug, assembled scaffolding, built and painted to finish a simple but practical extension for the sorceress's house. Finally, Anton's great desire was to help a friend expand her house, he wanted nothing for himself. His great satisfaction was the well-being of his two best friends.

