Introductions:

Tiny the T-rex, in name and stature, just turned 19 a week ago. His birthday lands at the beginning of summer. This summer, his first summer after graduating high school, he spent his birthday at home with his parents, not doing much. His mom made his favorite dinner, and his dad picked up a cake from the local bakery. His older brother and sister, who had moved away years ago, called from out of state and sang him a happy birthday song. All Tiny's friends from school were out of town for the summer. That didn't matter so much because most of them were also going to school out of state, so graduation was pretty much the last time he would see them.

Tiny wanted to do something special to commemorate this new segment of life, leaving high school and transitioning to something new and a little scary. Everyone did the best they could to make his day as unique as possible, but it was nothing like what he envisioned.

After his birthday, Tiny felt uninspired. He spent most of his time replaying video games and taking lazy walks through the neighborhood. At the end of a lazy stroll, midsummer, Tinny saw the mailman driving off as he got home. He waved and then went to check the mail. There was a sales paper for the local grocery store and something else, a fancy-looking envelope shaped like a taco. The envelope, with its wax seal engraved with the letters T.K., was addressed to him. Who could have possibly sent him this awesome invitation?

Rouge, the raptor, grew up under the tutelage of a human. She was raised as a pet, kind of like a cat, and loved her life and her human. Her human, Mary, was 28 when she adopted Rouge. They spent 30 beautiful years together until the day Mary passed away in her sleep. Rouge was moved out of the home she grew up in and into a group home for abandoned dinosaurs. Rouge was despondent all the time her first couple of years in the group home. She would stay in her room and keep to herself for the most part. She didn't grow up around dinosaurs, only Mary, so she wasn't sure how to interact with the others. One day a new resident came to live in the home, a stegosaurus named Bruce. He was about Rouge's age and was determined to get to know everyone, including her. He made sure to stop by and speak to her every day; he even started dragging her to the social evenings they had once a month. After a while, Rouge came out of her shell and began making friends. Bruce left to live with an extended family member, but he wrote everyone letters every now and again. One day she was sitting in her room flipping thru a photo album. Mary had made it after some adventure they had. They used to have a lot of adventures together. Mary had just turned to the last page when she heard a knock at the door. She looked up to see Max, the orderly, and He told her that she had gotten some mail while handing her an envelope.

It was fancy, shaped like a taco with a wax seal engraved with the letters T.K. closing it. It all looked a little too elaborate for Bruce to have sent it. She wondered who did send it while sitting on her bed, admiring the envelope.

Penelope was a teenage Trex. She was 16 and living her best life. She went to an all-human school, but nobody treated her any different. Well, now nobody treated her differently. When she was in the first grade and first introduced to human children, she had some issues making friends. Mostly because she found humans to be delicious, and she kept trying to eat all her classmates. She learned the hard way that eating your classmates makes them feel bad the day that the goldfish attempted to eat her. She dropped her human cravings cold turkey from then on, and since she has become quite popular. Now, she has plenty of friends and is even a cheerleader and the top gymnast in her school. She has fashioned herself into somewhat of an "it" girl.

One afternoon while home sitting on the couch searching thru magazines for the perfect dress when the phone rang. She rushed to answer, because why wouldn't it be for her. When she answered, she heard her best friend Katie's voice. Katie had called to tell her about a party Tom Kanes was throwing. Tom was a sophomore. He came from a wealthy family and always threw rowdy parties because his parents were always gone. It was his way to rebel to get back at his parents for his loneliness. All the cool kids went to Tom's parties, so she was a little miffed at hearing he was having another one, and she had yet to be officially invited. Before she could get mad, Katie told her that Tom had sent out a bunch of invitations in the mail. The theme of the party was retro. Katie had heard that there would be cassette tape decks and aerobics videos playing at the party. As soon as Penelope got off the phone, she rushed outside to check the mailbox, as she knew that there was absolutely no way she didn't get an invite to this party. Inside she saw a fancy envelope shaped like a taco. It had a wax seal closing it with the letters T.K. engraved into the wax. Cute, she thought as she took the envelope back upstairs. She meant to call Katie back but got caught up looking at dresses in her magazines.

Hankree was a middle-aged Trex who had just finished celebrating his 40th birthday. He worked as a trash collector in his town and loved his job. He looked forward to going to work every day. Hankree came from a line of trash collectors. His dad, granddad, and even his grandma on his mom's side had collected trash in that very same town. As a hobby, Hankree enjoyed tinkering. His job allowed him to collect all sorts of material. Whenever he saw something interesting that someone had thrown out, he would take it home and make it better. He had been doing it since he was a child. His dad would bring him all sorts of stuff to tinker with, and he would make all kinds of things. In the past, he had made a soft-serve ice coffee machine that was a big hit. He had also created a pair of headphones that was supposed to play the song that you were thinking of but couldn't quite remember. Instead, it only played Livin La Viva Loca on repeat. That one was not such a big hit. Hankree was a happy and creative dino, and everyone loved him most of the time. The thing about Hankree was that he tended to get caught up in his work, so caught up that he would forget to do basic things.

Stuff like picking up his dry cleaning, brushing his teeth, even eating and sleeping. Most of those things were fine but forgetting to eat became a significant issue for Hankree. When he failed to eat, he became hangry. That means bad-tempered or irritable as a result of hunger. When hangry, Hankree tended to go on rampages, looking for food and destroying property. Sometimes someone would get him a sandwich before he got too far away from his house. But on occasion, Hankree would make it out of the neighborhood. When he did, he always made a beeline to a human community. Hankree thought humans were a delicious and rare delicacy, craving them the most notably when hangry. That is until he met a human boy named Hal. Hal refused to be eaten by Hankree and trapped him until he didn't desire to eat humans anymore. After, Hal and Hankree became good friends. The same day Hal trapped Hankree was also the same day Hals mom made Hankree dinner. Spaghetti with meatballs and garlic bread. After that, every time Hankree got hangry, he would run straight to Hal's house and wait for dinner. He even learned to cook to make dinner for Hal and his family from time to time. One day as Hankree was getting home from work, he saw Hal waiting for him on his porch.

Hal's mom had made way too much spaghetti, so Hal brought some for Hankree and all his coworkers. Everyone in Hankrees neighborhood loved Hal's mom's cooking. Hal told Hankree that while he was waiting for him to come home, the postman had dropped off a letter for him. Hal handed Hankree a fancy-looking envelope shaped like a taco. It had a wax seal engraved with the letters T.K. closing it. "It looks like you have been invited to a taco party," Hal said while handing it over. "Be sure to bring back some taco recipes that we can try out," Hal added as they walked inside. Hankree didn't know who T.K. was, but he did love trying new things.

The Taco Party:

It's the day of the taco party, and all the dinosaurs are getting ready. Tiny decided to wear his "cool guy hat." It's an old cowboy hat that his great great great grandad bought on sale at some store in town that has since become a Starbucks. Tiny's grandad cubed originally bought the hat so he would feel cool enough to ask Tiny's grandmom cubed out on their first date. Since then, as the hat has passed from generation to generation, it has generally become common knowledge that you only wear it when you need to be extra cool. Locally sourced chocolate brown leather that had become soft and smooth while taking on a rugged appearance from being worn in for over a decade would make anyone extra cool.

Rouge and her hall neighbor Anna made a trip to the mall so that Rouge could buy a new dress. Now getting to the mall from the group home was quite a feat. You had to take two buses, a cab, another bus and then the train. It would take them all day to go and come back, so they decided to make the most of it. They stopped to take pictures at scenic spots, window shopped every chance they got, they even had a mukbang in the mall food court with their table neighbors. Rouge took Mary's necklaces with her to the mall. She wanted to find a dress to match it. Mary used to wear that necklace every single day. It was a large stone consisting of a mixed myriad of blues inside a silver frame and hung on a silver chain. Rouge went to the mall, intending to find a blue dress to match. With Anna's help, she ended up with a burnt orange dress that complimented the necklace better than any blue dress ever could. They even found shoes to match, blue ones that helped the necklace "POP!" Rouge, not being great at social situations, was glad to have a piece of Mary to take with her to the party. She was also very grateful that she had a new friend in Anna and was glad to be visiting the mall with her. Once they got back to the group home, Rouge put her purchases away and started making a new scrapbook containing her latest adventures at the group home.

The day Penelope had to research, but she ended up with what she considered the perfect retro outfit. It had a real 80s vibe, big hair, leg warmers, even a thrifted dayglow fanny pack. She was planning on using the fanny pack even after the party, as it could fit her cell phone and a travel charger! Penelope was nervous about the party. She had been to a ton of Tom Kane's parties, so she was not anxious about that. Penelope was worried because this was not a Tom Kane party. A few days after the finishing touch for her outfit, an actual walkman with a cassette tape arrived. Penelope received Tom Kane's 80's baby party invite in the mail. At that moment, though, Penelope was unsure about who T.K. and his taco-shaped invite were. Still, she became determined to use this party as a test run for her outfit's style-ability and party functionality. If nothing else, Penelope was the queen of every party she attended and had every intention to keep her reign afloat. One problem, though, she had no idea who all was going to be at this party. How could Penelope smooze without background info! Penelope cold-called a party last when she first started human school. That didn't go over well, and she had no desire to revisit that experience. She decided she needed a backup plan, so she ordered a mini encyclopedia of regional persons, creatures, and otherwise sentient otherthings. It arrived the day before T.K.'s party and fit perfectly into her fanny pack. She was now ready to rule T.K.'s party like the party queen that she was.

The day before T.K.'s party Hankree spent his day prepping. He was excited about the party, but he had to remember he was on a mission. That mission being, acquire the local favorite taco recipe. If the said recipe was a secret, acquire any taco recipe. He wanted to be sure he remained prepared to document any taco cooking experience. Hence, he packed his camera, a tape recorder, two blank journals, three journals full of his cooking and test recipe notes, his reading glasses, throat lozenges for extended talk sessions, extra batteries for his tape recorder, and ducktape. He also remembered to pick up his dry cleaning to look presentable for the food, I mean party.

The only parties Hankree usually went to were block parties, so He was unsure how people would react to him at this T.K. Taco Party. Hankree knew that he usually came off as a party killer. He didn't like to dance, so instead, he would start conversations with party-goers. He talked about facts and statistics and mechanical engineering stuff more than fun party things, which usually did not interest his fellow party-goers. He once tried to research fun things to talk about at parties, but his results were inconclusive. So he reached out and asked everyone around him what "fun" things to talk about at parties were. His coworkers told him to talk about the finer details of trash collection, which always went well at parties they attended. His neighbors said he should bring up party planning details for neighborhood block parties, as that was what they talked about at their parties. Hal, on the other hand, told him not to do any of that. Then he gave Hankree a plastic cube full of tiny cards. Each card had a "conversation starter" written on it, but to Hankree, it just looked like a random thing to say. Hal assured him that if he would just pull a new card each time he talked to a party-goer, he would succeed at being a cool party-goer. Hankree trusted Hal the most, so he made sure to take a stack of cards from the cube and put them in his pocket. While also making room in his satchel for the cube containing the rest of the cards. He did have to remove all three notebooks containing his culinary research. Still, he figured being a big hit at the party could be exponentially better than sharing his culinary research in his mission to obtain that taco recipe.

All the dinosaurs arrived at the same time. Their respective Ubers, Lyfts, Yellow Cabs, and in Hankrees case, a garbage truck arrived in front of T.K.'s modest-sized home. It had a dirt yard and a giant boat full of taco remnants out front. They could see party lights strobing and hear the base of some party song playing inside. The dinosaurs had never met before that night, but each one was happy not to be the only dinosaur at the party. Standing outside T.K.'s home was a small group of dragons. As the dinosaurs got out of their vehicles, they saw the dragons munching on something before they walked inside. Tiny started the awkward introductions as the dinosaurs stood around the front porch steps looking at each other and shifting from foot to foot. "Hi, I'm Tiny, in name and stature. Yall ready for this party?"

Penelope was the first to speak up. "I was born ready! Penelope is the name, and parties are my game! Well, parties are not all I do, but it sounded nice, right." At this point, Rouge jumped into the conversation. "Penelope, that sounded great. You seem to be a very energetic young lady. I, on the other hand, am a very mild-mannered old lady." Rouge laughed at her joke. "I'm Rouge, by the way, your resident old lady raptor." Rouge laughed some more, as did the rest of the group. Hankree stepped closer to the center of the group at this point. "Hi, I'm Hankree, resident tinkerer, junk collector, and future taco recipe holder. I would also like to add Ms. Rouge that I consider you resident raptor extraordinaire because you don't look a day over 35." Hankree said that last part with a wink, causing Rouge to blush. Tiny decided to rally the troops at this point. "Now that we're all friends Let's Party!" With that, he motioned for everyone to make their way up the stairs and into the party.

As they walked inside, they were overwhelmed with loud dance music and strobing party lights. As their eyes adjusted to the light, they could see, milling about, all the party-goers. Some were dancing, and some were flying. Some were eating and drinking, while others were laughing and kidding around. To the dinosaurs, the thing that stood out the most was that all the party-goers were dragons. They were impressed and surprised at just how many full-sized dragons could fit in the modest home. The only thing more abundant than dragons at the party were tacos. So Many Tacos! The Dinosaurs were just amazed by just how many tacos fit into the house, along with all the dragons. While the group just stood and stared in aw Hankree suddenly started yelling to be heard over the music. "Isn't it amazing? There are so many dragons eating so many tacos at such an astounding rate. Yet, the supply of tacos does not seem to be affected by the rate at which they are consumed. Astounding!" Before any of the dinosaurs could reply, a young boy with a dog walked up to them.

"Hi!" The boy yelled so that the dinosaurs could hear him over the music. "Welcome to my party, I'm The Kid, but everyone calls me T.K. for short. I'm so glad that yall could make it out. I hope you didn't have any problems finding the place." Hankree was just about to expound the merits of GPS to The Kid when pandemonium broke out.

The Afterparty:

A dragon standing next to a front room window was chatting with his friends when suddenly he burped. On most occasions, no one would have even noticed. Everyone noticed this time, as a stream of fire came out of his mouth, catching the curtains on fire when he burped. The dragons in question seemed just as shocked to see the curtains burning as everyone else. Everyone on the first floor of the house stopped and stared at the curtains, bringing the party to a sudden halt even as the music kept blasting and the lights kept flashing. Tinny snapped out of the shock that had overtaken the room first. He grabbed the punchbowl and threw its red sugary contents at the burning curtains, successfully putting the fire out. Despite his heroic efforts, no one applauded. Instead, all of the dragon's faces transformed, all changing from shocked party faces into strongly disapproving looks. Tiny, thinking everyone was mad at him, squeaked out, "Sorr..." but before he could finish, The Kid yelled "RUNNN!" and sprinted towards the kitchen. In the background, you could hear a low grumble reverberated around the room. It was the sound of a houseful of dragon stomachs grumbling in unison along with a hint of the whooshing sound made by those dragons turning to look at each other in an uncomfortable panic. The Kid was franticly digging through the kitchen recycling bin. Suddenly he arose from the bin grasping an empty salsa container. He looked closely at the label and then turned towards the dinosaurs, mouth agape, then it happened. In unison, all the dragons started to burp fire catching the whole house up in flames. As streams of fire jetted around the room, the dinosaurs began to run. Thankfully they all just barely made it out in time. As they huddled together in T.K's front yard, not too far from the boat. All they could do was stand there and watched the house burn down.

The dragons, obviously impervious to flames, didn't rush to flee the house. Once it burnt down, they were all still inside, crying. The dinosaurs collectively started to tear up over all the destruction and sadness when The Kid walked up to them. "I'm so sorry about all of this," he said. "It was shaping up to be a great party." Hankree sounding very blue, asked in a sorrowful tone, "What happen?" The Kid begins to explain. You see, it seems that in DragonLand, yes, this realm is called DragonLand. It is a very established fact that dragons love tacos.

You could think of any kind of taco, tofu, beef, chicken, even banana tacos. As long as the food medium is served in a taco vehicle, dragons will love it. Dragons also love anything that accompanies tacos, the toppings, serving trays, and especially the parties. There is only one thing that all dragons HATE when it comes to tacos, Spicy Salsa. It has been well established over decades that Spicy Salsa should never be given to a dragon, that is, unless your goal is for it to start unwillingly spewing fire. Spicy Salsa always gives dragons literal heartburn. Their stomachs can't take the spice giving them acid reflux. Due to dragon anatomy and physiology, that reflux starts out as acid. It travels through their cells as an acid, pooling into the area surrounding their heart, as their hearts are below their stomachs, and the acid pools out downward. Once the acid is around the heart, it is exposed to air, as dragons' lungs are behind their heart. Once exposed to air, acid turns into flames, as that happens when dragon acid meets air. The fire causes mass discomfort to the dragon involved, who, in response, will begin to burp uncontrollably. This burping increases the amount of air available to the acid flames, stoking the fire and expelling it from the dragon's body. As this is an entirely different process than when dragons willingly spew fire, the flames in this scenario tend to be much hotter than regular dragon flames.

After hearing this, Hankree, a scientist at heart, asked, "So is that why the house burned down so quickly?" To which The Kid responded with surprise and a smirk, "that's exactly why great observation! Hey, since you are so good at observations, maybe you all can help me solve a mystery." Upon hearing the word mystery, Rouge perked up. "Mystery? I love mysteries! I would be happy to help!" "Me too!" Tiny added. "The helping part, not the loving mysteries part. I'm great at helping but bad at puzzles." At this point, everyone turned to look at Penelope as she had not replied to The Kid's request. She looked back and then thought for a second. "So, if we help you with this mystery, that means you are going to make us all VIP guests at an epic after "the house actually burned down" party, correct? I mean, we need to get something out of this deal." The Kid laughed, "of course! In fact, I will make you guys VIPs for life to all my parties if you solve this one."