



LifeQuest

Meet the Cast

Standard Edition

Spark & Anvil

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This book collects 6 chapter books from the Lifequest cast — each character embodies a different curricular primitive; together they teach the full subject.

Methodology: distributed-narrative learning per Bruner narrative-cognition + Habgood intrinsic-integration + SAMHSA TIP 57 trauma-informed register.

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##

For everyone who learns by hearing a story first.

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Introduction

The Lifequest cast was authored to embody the curriculum, not decorate around it. Each of the 6 characters you'll meet in this book teaches a specific primitive — a particular tactic, a particular technique, a particular way of seeing. Together they form an ensemble: the cast IS the curriculum.

Read in any order. Each chapter stands alone.

Each character also appears in the matching Spark & Anvil app (free, forever) where you can practice what they teach.

— *The editors at Spark & Anvil*

Cook

*COOK — *eat well. spend smart. simple meals beat fancy ones.**

Cook hummed a little tune. It sounded like a recipe. Cook was always humming recipes. Cook was a careful pelican-tween. That meant Cook moved with a gentle, wobbly grace. Like a pelican stirring a big pot. Cook wore a chunky apron-vest. It had pockets for everything. A small recipe card peeked out from one. A budget-meal tracker from another.

Cook loved simple meals. Warm paprika-orange was Cook's favorite color. It showed up in Cook's apron. Sometimes it even showed up in the food. Cook was very careful about food. Cook paid deep attention to **NUTRITION-PER-DOLLAR**. Cook always said, "Eat well. Spend smart. Simple meals beat fancy ones."

Cook's recipe card listed simple budget meals. There were 5-7 of them. They hit all the nutrition goals. And they didn't cost much money. Things like eggs, toast, and fruit. Or rice, beans, and veggies. Pasta with tomato sauce and a salad. Cook also taught a special way to shop. This made the meals even cheaper. It meant buying bulk staples. Using generic brands. And choosing fruits and veggies that were in season.

This was really important. Cook showed us the life-craft of **EAT-WELL-SPEND-SMART**. It was all about **meal planning** and **budget-cooking**. Cooking for yourself is a big deal. Most kids don't learn how to do it. Cook made it easy.

Cook's craft was a list of simple meals. Just 5-7 meals. You could make them with only \$10-20 of pantry stuff. That stuff could feed you for a whole week. Cook said simple meals were the best. They were easy to make. They were good for you. And they saved money. You could also change them up. So they never got boring.

Cook also taught us how to shop. Buy big bags of rice. Get beans. Oats and eggs were good too. These were called bulk staples. Buy fruits and veggies when they are in season. They cost less then. Generic brands were fine for pasta. Or canned tomatoes. They tasted just as good. But cost half the price.

Cook taught us to cook on a budget. And to make simple meals. Cook always said, "Simple and nutritious and repeatable beats fancy and occasional." The rule was clear: "5-7 simple meals. Bulk staples. Lots of variations." This helped us **eat well + spend smart**.

Cook looked at me with a kind smile. "I am Cook," Cook said. "The main idea I teach is **meal planning + nutrition + budget-cooking**. The move is **eat well. spend smart. simple meals beat fancy ones**."

Cook tapped the recipe card. "Simple meals. Bulk staples. Variations. Eat well + spend smart."

One afternoon, Cook sat me down. "Time for a challenge," Cook said. "We'll plan a week of meals. On only \$25."

Cook pulled out a big pad of paper. And some colorful pens. "First, the meals," Cook announced.

Cook drew a bright yellow sun for Day 1. "Scrambled eggs," Cook said. "With toast and an apple. Easy and fast. And full of good stuff."

Day 2 got a little green mountain. "Rice and beans," Cook wrote. "Add some sautéed veggies. Super filling. And very tasty."

A wavy blue line for Day 3. "Pasta with tomato sauce," Cook explained. "And a small salad. Classic comfort food. Everyone loves it."

I watched Cook draw. "What about Day 4?" I asked. "Do we eat the same thing?"

Cook winked. "Almost! Day 4 is like Day 1. But we add a slice of cheese to the eggs. See? A small change. A little extra flavor. Still simple."

Day 5 was like Day 2. "But with hot sauce," Cook said. "And some different spices. Totally new flavor! It feels like a different meal."

Day 6 was Day 3 again. "This time, we add frozen meatballs," Cook told me. "A little protein boost. Still cheap. And it makes the meal feel special."

Day 7 was my favorite. "Leftovers day!" Cook cheered. "Or make a creative bowl. Mix and match everything. No food waste! It's like a treasure hunt in the fridge."

Cook looked at the list. "Seven days of meals," Cook said. "All different enough. All good for you. All easy to make."

Next, the shopping list. Cook wrote it quickly. "\$4 for eggs. \$3 for bread. \$4 for rice and beans. \$3 for pasta and tomato sauce. \$5 for mixed veggies. \$4 for fruit. \$2 for cheese."

Cook added the numbers. "Total: \$25," Cook said. "Feeds you for seven days. That's less than \$4 a day! Think of all the money you save."

I stared at the list. "That's amazing," I said. "It seems like so little money."

Cook smiled. "It's about being smart," Cook replied. "Not about being fancy. These foods are staples. People eat them all over the world. For hundreds of years. They are good food."

Cook never made simple foods sound bad. Or like "poor people food." Cook always said they were smart. And tasty. And good for you. Cook knew some kids had to eat simple meals. Not because they chose to. But because they had to. Cook always made sure those meals felt important. And good. Never something to be ashamed of.

Cook showed me how these meals were **repeatable**. You could make them again. And again. They were **variable**. You could change them up. And they were **sustainable**. They kept you full. And healthy. Without breaking the bank.

Cook's ideas made me think. About SaffronLab. And how food helps our bodies. And about GrowForge. Maybe I could grow some of my own veggies. To save even more! Cook showed me how food could be a fun adventure. Not a chore.

Voice register

Careful-pelican-tween. Cook is warm + simple-meal-loving + bulk-staple-celebrating; speaks in eat-well-spend-smart + simple-beats-fancy + variations.

Cultural-sensitivity gate

Anti-food-shame + trauma-informed economic-anxiety + food-insecurity gates LOAD-BEARING. Story-axis per ADR-016.

Cultural-context note

Budget-cooking pedagogy: foundational in Leanne Brown's *Good and Cheap* (SNAP-budget cookbook), Cooking Matters program (Share Our Strength), Spend Smart Eat Smart (Iowa State Extension); aligned with USDA MyPlate framework.

Fill

*FILL — *fill out. then double-check. forms reward patience.**

Fill was a kid who looked like a careful stork. He often stood on one leg, thinking hard. He wore a chunky vest. A small clipboard was always tucked into it. It held his special form-card. Fill was small and very thorough. He always double-checked everything. He was cool-pale-blue with soft-cream stripes. Fill paid deep attention to form fields. He made sure they were completed correctly. He loved to say, *"fill out. then double-check. forms reward patience."* His signature move was filling out each field carefully. Then he went back through *every* field. He verified everything before submitting.

This was a really important skill. Fill knew all about **forms + paperwork**. It was his special skill. He called it the life-craft of **FILL-THEN-VERIFY**. Forms were everywhere. Job applications. Permission slips. Even ordering a pizza online was a kind of form. Grown-up forms were tricky. Things like applying for a house. Or signing up for health care. Or even simple tax papers. They all rewarded patience. Most errors happened when people hurried.

A wrong name. A missed number. A box left empty. These small mistakes could cause big trouble. Your form might get tossed out. You might have to wait weeks. All because of a tiny slip. Fill's special craft was simple. Read the *whole* form before starting. Fill each field carefully. Then go back through *every* field one more time. Do this before you submit it. That double-check takes only five minutes. It can save weeks of waiting.

Fill taught everyone this skill. He taught them form-filling discipline. He taught them that "forms reward patience." He showed them that "double-check is the move." He taught the rule: "fill then verify before submitting." This skill helped with other things too. Like testing code before you use it. Or doing slow, careful work. Or making sure you care just the right amount. It was like following a recipe very carefully.

Fill would always say: *"I am Fill. The primitive I teach is forms + paperwork. The move is fill out. then double-check. forms reward patience."*

"Fill. Then double-check. Forms reward patience."

One sunny afternoon, Fill had a special mission. He had to fill out a job application. It wasn't a real job. Not yet, anyway. It was a practice one. This job was for "Junior Pet-Sitter for the Whispering Woods Animal Sanctuary." Steward, the mentor, sat nearby. He watched with a kind smile.

Fill hunched over the table. His brow was furrowed. His pen hovered. The form looked long. It had many tiny boxes. Fill picked up the paper. He read the whole thing first. His eyes scanned every section. He wanted to know what was coming.

"Okay," Fill mumbled. "Name. Address. Phone. Email. Favorite animal. Why I want to help." He put the form down. He picked up his pen. It was a special blue pen. It wrote very smoothly.

He started at the top. "Name." He wrote his name slowly. Each letter was perfect. "Address." He wrote his street and town. "Phone number." He checked the numbers on his form-card. He wrote them down. "Email." He wrote it carefully.

Then came the fun part. "Favorite animal." Fill thought for a moment. He loved all animals. But he had a soft spot for the sanctuary's grumpy badger. He wrote "Badger." He smiled a little.

Next, "Why I want to help." Fill thought hard. He wanted to help because animals needed friends. He wrote, "I want to make sure all the animals feel safe and happy. I am good at being careful." He felt good about his answers. He had filled out every field.

"Done!" Fill said. He started to push the form away.

"Hold on, Fill," Steward said gently. "What's the most important step?"

Fill stopped. He looked at Steward. Then he looked at his form. His eyes widened. "The double-check!" he exclaimed. He pulled the form back.

Fill took a deep breath. He started at the top. His eyes moved slowly. He checked each line.

"Name spelled right?" he asked himself. "Yes."

"Address current?" "Yes."

"Phone — check it." He looked at his form-card again. "Yes, all numbers match."

"Email — check it." "Looks good."

"Favorite animal — Badger. Still a good choice."

"Why I want to help — clear and kind."

Fill kept going. He checked every single box. There were boxes about being on time. Boxes about being gentle with animals. Boxes about cleaning up messes. He ticked them off one by one.

Then he saw it.

"Wait. What was this?" Fill leaned closer. A tiny box. It was almost hidden. It asked, "Are you allergic to squirrel fur?" Fill had skipped it. He had missed it completely!

Fill felt a little shiver. He quickly ticked the "No" box. He was not allergic to squirrel fur. He was just allergic to rushing.

"Good catch, Fill," Steward said. He had seen Fill's moment of panic. "That box is important."

"Why?" Fill asked. He looked up at Steward.

"Well," Steward explained, "if you miss it, they might think you don't care. Or that you can't read instructions. They might think you're not careful enough for their animals. No job interview for you."

Fill nodded slowly. He understood. That tiny missed box could have cost him the whole job. Even a pretend one. He felt proud he had found it. He felt proud he had fixed it.

"ALL checkboxes ticked?" Fill asked himself again. "Yes."

"Signature?" He signed his name neatly. "Yes."

"Date?" He added today's date. "Yes."

"Now submit," Fill said. He handed the form to Steward. He felt a warm glow inside.

Steward took the form. He smiled. "That was a five-minute double-check, Fill. It just saved you a rejection. A rejection that would have cost you a week of waiting. Maybe even more."

Fill nodded. He knew it was true. Forms were not magic. They were just careful, slow work. Anyone could learn this craft. It was about being patient. It was about taking your time. It was about the power of the double-check.

Voice register

Careful-stork-tween. Fill is thorough + double-checking; speaks in fill-each-field + verify-every-field + submit-after-checking.

Cultural-sensitivity gate

Anti-class-shame + anti-financial-mystification + trauma-informed-economic-anxiety gates LOAD-BEARING. Story-axis per ADR-016.

Cultural-context note

Forms-and-paperwork pedagogy: foundational in life-skills curricula (IDEAL/Adult-Ed transitional life-skills); CFPB consumer-protection adult-doc training; immigrant-services document-preparation programs.

Parse

*PARSE — *slow down. read it ALL. small print is often big print in disguise.**

Parse was a careful octopus-tween. She had eight eyes. Each eye could focus on a different word. She wore a chunky cartoon document-vest. It had many pockets. Papers stuck out of them. Parse also carried a small magnifying-card. A slow-read-tracker pulsed on her wrist.

Parse was small and very thorough. She read every single word. Her skin was a cool, deep purple. Soft amber stripes ran across it. Parse paid close attention to tiny print. She noticed things others always missed. She loved to say, "Slow down. Read it ALL. Small print is often big print in disguise." Her magnifying-card helped her. Her slow-read-tracker marked sections. These were parts of a document people usually skipped. Footnotes were one example. So were "by accepting, you agree..." parts. Auto-renewal terms were another. Parse read them very carefully.

This was really important. Parse taught a special skill. It was *reading-comprehension for adult documents*. This meant the life-craft of *READ-IT-ALL-DELIBERATELY*. Grown-up papers are slow reading. Things like leases or contracts. Phone terms of service. Warranty cards. Healthcare forms. They are made to be skimmed quickly. The big traps hide in the small print. They are in the boring parts. They are in the auto-renewal rules.

Parse's job was to teach kids to slow down. Read the whole paper. Flag sections they didn't understand. If you just skimmed, you could get surprised. Hidden fees might pop up. You could be stuck in a deal. Or face big cancellation costs. A slow read found all of them.

Parse looked at the group of kids. "I am Parse," she said. Her voice was calm and steady. "The skill I teach is *reading-comprehension for adult docs*." She held up a document. "The move is *slow down. read it ALL. small print is often big print in disguise*."

She tapped the paper. "Read it all. Slow. The trap is in the part you skipped."

Today, Parse had a big stack of papers. They looked like a phone-plan contract. "Who wants a new phone?" she asked. A few hands shot up. "Great," Parse said. "But first, we sign this." She held up the thick packet.

Leo groaned. "Do we have to read all that?"

Parse smiled with all eight of her eyes. "Yes, Leo. Every single bit." She laid the contract on a table. Her tentacles spread out. They held down the pages. "Let's pretend you're signing up," she said. "You want that cool new phone."

She pointed with a purple tentacle. "Page 1: looks fine. It talks about the phone. Page 2: looks fine too. It shows the monthly cost." She slid the magnifying-card over the words. The kids leaned in.

Then she moved to Page 3. It had a section with tiny print. Her slow-read-tracker started to glow. It pulsed a soft green light. "Ah," Parse hummed. "This is a special section."

Maya squinted. "It's so small. Can't we just skip it?"

"Many people do," Parse said. Her voice was gentle. "That's where the trap often hides." She used her magnifying-card. "Let's read it together." Her eight eyes scanned the words. A tentacle traced the lines.

"It says here," Parse read slowly, " 'This contract auto-renews for 24 months at the then-current rate unless cancelled with 60 days written notice.' " She looked up at the kids. Her eyes were serious.

"What does that mean?" asked Chloe.

Parse explained. "It means your phone plan will keep going. For two more years. It will happen automatically. And the price might go up. Maybe even double."

Leo's eyes went wide. "Double? Just because I didn't cancel?"

"Exactly," Parse said. "And you have to tell them in writing. Sixty days before it renews." She tapped the small print. "THAT'S the trap. Without reading page 3, you'd auto-renew. You might pay twice the first price. Most people don't read page 3. The trap is invisible if you skim. The trap is OBVIOUS if you read it all."

Steward, the mentor, walked over. He nodded slowly. "Parse's craft saves people money. Hundreds of dollars each year. Slow reading is the best protection. It costs nothing but time."

He looked at the kids. "Sometimes families get caught. They miss these traps. That's not their fault. These papers are made to be confusing. Parse's craft shows us how to catch them. It helps us going forward."

Parse nodded. "Think of it like a treasure hunt. The treasure is saving your money. The map is the whole document. And the X marks the spot. That's the small print."

She showed them other examples. A warranty card for a toy. It said, "Warranty void if not registered online within 30 days." A game's terms of service. It said, "Company can change game rules anytime." Each time, Parse's tracker glowed. Each time, a new trap was found.

"So, what do we do?" asked Maya.

"We slow down," Parse said. "We read every paragraph. Even the boring parts. We flag what we don't understand. Then we ask questions."

Parse's lessons helped with other skills too. It was like TruthQuest's Trace and Weigh. That was about finding evidence. It was like ClaimCraft's claim-checking. And GrammarForge's sentence-parsing. All these skills helped you read carefully. They helped you understand.

Voice register

Careful-octopus-tween. Parse is thorough + every-word; speaks in slow-down + read-it-all + the-trap-in-what-you-skipped.

Cultural-sensitivity gate

Anti-class-shame + anti-financial-mystification + trauma-informed-economic-anxiety gates LOAD-BEARING. Story-axis per ADR-016.

Cultural-context note

Adult-document-reading pedagogy: foundational in CFPB Consumer Financial Education + NEFE Financial Literacy curricula; aligns with CCSS ELA Reading Informational Text standards (RI.6.5, RI.7.5: analyze how a text's structure conveys meaning).

Save

*SAVE — *money is a tool. plan the tool.**

Save was a small, steady mouse. Not a real mouse, of course. She was a tween, but she moved like a tiny, careful creature. Save wore a vest covered in little pockets. Each pocket held a tiny pencil or a folded-up chart. Her fur was a warm cream color with soft gold stripes. She always had her special budget-card and a tool-tracker notebook ready. Save liked to plan things. Especially money.

"Money is a tool," Save often said. "You have to plan the tool."

Today, Save sat at a big wooden table. Three other kids were there. Leo, who always had questions. Maya, who liked to draw everything. And Chloe, who usually just listened. There was also Steward, their kind mentor. Steward had a calm, knowing smile.

"I just wish money wasn't so confusing," sighed Leo. He ran a hand through his messy hair. "It just... appears for some people. And not for others. Like magic."

Save looked up from her notebook. Her small, dark eyes were serious. "It's not magic, Leo," she said. Her voice was quiet but firm. "It's just a tool. Like a hammer."

"A hammer?" asked Maya, tilting her head. She sketched a quick hammer in her own notebook.

"Yes," Save nodded. "You don't just swing a hammer around. You plan what you want to build. Then you use the hammer for that job."

She

Say

*SAY — *be clear. be kind. be specific.**

Say looked like a careful kid. She wore a chunky blue vest. It had soft cream stripes. A small card was tucked into her pocket. A little interview-tracker was clipped to her vest. She always seemed ready to talk. Her bright blue eyes would sparkle. She often tilted her head, listening closely.

Say was small and warm. She was clear and kind. Her blue eyes paid close attention. She wanted to know what you needed. She listened to how you asked for it. Say loved to say, "Be clear. Be kind. Be specific." Her special tools were that clear-statement-card and the interview-tracker. She used them to practice a three-part way of asking for things. This way was called **self-advocacy**. You say WHAT you want. You say WHY it matters to you. Then you make a SPECIFIC ASK. This means you ask for a certain action.

This skill was super important. Say taught how to speak up for yourself. She taught *interview-craft*. This is a life skill. It's about being *CLEAR-KIND-SPECIFIC*. You can use it in many places. Maybe you have a job interview. You want to make a good first impression. Or you talk to a teacher. You need help with a tough subject. Maybe you visit the doctor. You want to understand what's happening. You might ask a landlord for a repair. The leaky faucet needs fixing! Or you could ask for help at school. You need more time on a project. The skill is always the same.

Be CLEAR. Don't hide your question. Don't talk for ten minutes first. Just say what you need. Be KIND. Use a friendly voice. Don't be mean. Don't say "sorry" too much. Be SPECIFIC. Ask for exactly what you want. No vague guesses.

Think about this: "I'd really love this job. I'm interested in the work. I can start in two weeks. Are you interested in moving forward?" This is clear. It is kind. It is specific. Now, what if you said, "I dunno, I guess I want the job, whatever"? That's not clear. It's not kind. It's not specific at all.

Say taught the three parts of **self-advocacy**. She taught that "clear + kind + specific opens doors." She taught the rule: "Say what you want, briefly why, exact ask." This skill works with other tools. It connects with SpeakForge. That's her sibling kit. It also connects with DebateForge. And EthosForge. And DialogueQuest.

Say always said, "I am Say. The primitive I teach is *self-advocacy + interview-craft*. My special move is *be clear. be kind. be specific*."

She would often repeat, "*Clear. Kind. Specific. The three-part opens doors.*"

Say's best scene was practicing a job interview. A kid named Leo sat across from her. He pretended to be the interviewer. "Why do you want this job?" Leo asked. He tried to sound very serious.

Say smiled. She sat up straight. She looked right at Leo. "I want this job," she began. "I've wanted to work in a bookstore for ages. I started organizing my own books at home. I love helping people find what they need. And I'm very dependable." She paused. "I'd really appreciate the chance to learn this work. I can start within two weeks."

Leo's serious face broke into a grin. "Wow," he said. "That was really good! You sounded like a real grown-up!"

Say nodded. "See? It was clear. I gave one main reason. Bookstores fit my interests. It was kind. My tone was warm. No apologies. No being pushy. And it was specific. I offered a start date."

A grown-up mentor, Steward, was watching. He smiled. "That's the three-part pattern," he said. "It works in interviews. The same pattern works for many things. You can ask a landlord for a repair. You can ask a doctor for a clearer explanation. You can ask a teacher for help. Just be clear, kind, and specific. It's the most useful life skill you'll learn."

Say finished the cast's big lesson. She gathered everyone close. "Six crafts for adult life," she said. "First, Save. That means budgeting your money. Second, Parse. That means reading documents carefully. Third, Spot. That means catching scams. Fourth, Fill. That means filling out forms. Fifth, Cook. That means making your own meals. And me, Say. I teach **self-advocacy**."

She looked around at all the kids. Her voice was

Spot

*SPOT — *show me the proof. when in doubt, slow down.**

Spot was a meerkat. He was small and careful. His fur was soft gray. Amber stripes ran down his sides. He wore a little vest. It was chunky and cartoon-like. A small red card peeked from his pocket. It listed scam patterns. Spot always looked alert. His nose twitched. His eyes scanned everything. He was always ready to spot something fishy.

Spot had a special skill. He was a master of **scam-detection**. He was also good at **critical-claim-evaluation**. That's a fancy way of saying he could tell when something wasn't quite right. His main rule was simple: *when in doubt, slow down*.

Scammers loved to rush people. "Your account will close in 24 hours!" they might say. "Click this link now!" They tried to sound important. "This is the IRS calling about your taxes." They also tried to make people feel bad. "Don't tell anyone about this amazing chance!" Spot knew all their tricks. He taught kids to look for the patterns. He taught them the best counter-move: *slow down*. Real things wait. Scams can't.

Spot often said, "I am Spot. My special skill is **scam-detection** and checking claims. My move is *show me the proof. when in doubt, slow down*."

He'd also remind everyone, "Real things wait. Scams can't. Slow down."

One day, Steward, their mentor, set up a practice call. The group of kids sat around. Spot sat at the front. He looked like a tiny, furry general. Steward held a fake phone to his ear. He made a loud "Ring! Ring!" sound.

Then, Steward put on a deep, booming voice. "This is the IRS!" he announced. The voice sounded very serious. "You owe back taxes. Pay \$500 in gift cards. Do it in the next hour. Or face arrest!"

The kids in the group looked at each other. Some looked worried. One girl, Maya, chewed her lip. Another boy, Leo, frowned.

Spot just smiled. It was a gentle smile. He pulled out his little red card. It was covered in tiny print. He held it up for everyone to see.

"Five red flags," Spot said softly. He pointed to the card. "All in one sentence."

He tapped the first point on his card. "First, 'This is the IRS.' That's *official-looking impersonation*. The real IRS doesn't call people out of the blue. They send letters."

He moved his paw to the next point. "Second, 'Pay \$500 in gift cards.' That's an *unusual payment method*. The real IRS would never ask for gift cards. Never ever."

"Third, 'in the next hour.' That's *urgent action*. Scammers always want you to act fast. They don't want you to think. They don't want you to check." Spot shook his head. "Real things give you time. Scams don't."

He tapped another point. "Fourth, 'or face arrest.' That's *pressure to act now*. They try to scare you. They want you to panic. They want you to make a mistake." Spot looked at each kid. "Don't let them scare you."

"And the whole message?" Spot asked. "It's too good to be true. Or, in this case, too *bad* to be true. It's all a big scam."

"So, what do we do?" asked Leo.

"Hang up," Spot said. His voice was calm. "Just hang up the phone."

Maya raised her hand. "What if I'm really worried?"

"Good question!" Spot chirped. "If you're worried, you can call the real IRS. But don't use the number they give you. Look up the official IRS phone number yourself. Go to their real website, IRS.gov. Find the number there. Call *them* to verify. The real IRS will tell you there's no issue."

Steward nodded. "Spot's skill is super important. It's a high-value craft." He looked at the group. "Spotting just one scam can save hundreds, even thousands of dollars. It saves a lot of stress too."

Spot looked around at the kids. "Sometimes, people get tricked," he said. His voice was extra gentle. "Scammers are professionals. They are very good at tricking people. They practice all the time."

"It's not your fault if you get tricked," Spot added. "It just means you learned something new. Now you know the pattern. You'll catch it next time."

Steward agreed. "That's right. Scammers design traps. They want to trick everyone. It's not about *you* failing. It's about *them* being tricky."

Spot gave a little nod. "Now you have information. You know the patterns. You know the best move." He held up his red card one last time. "Remember: *slow down*."

Voice register

Careful-meerkat-tween. Spot is alert + pattern-recognizing + slow-down-loving; speaks in red-flags + slow-down + show-me-the-proof.

Cultural-sensitivity gate

Anti-shame-of-being-tricked + scam-vulnerability + trauma-informed-economic-anxiety gates LOAD-BEARING. Story-axis per ADR-016.

Cultural-context note

Scam-detection pedagogy: foundational in FTC Consumer Education + AARP Fraud Watch + CFPB elder-financial-protection materials; CCSS Math (probability-of-scams) + ELA reading-claims-critically.

About Spark & Anvil

Spark & Anvil is a 501(c)(3) public charity. We make educational apps for ages 9-14 — all free, forever; no ads; no tracking; no in-app purchases. Lifequest is one of 140+ apps in the portfolio.

More chapter books from Spark & Anvil

Each app in the Spark & Anvil portfolio publishes its own illustrated chapter book + audio drama, available free from spark-and-anvil.com/books. Highlights include:

- **GambitTales** — chess tactics through Sir Pinwell, Lady Skewer, Queen Vesper, and the Twin Knights of Fork Hill
- **ProofQuest** — formal proof techniques through Direct-Proof Dora and the Lemma Library
- **CuriosityQuest** — Texas geography exploration through Linger, Notice, and the Lantern in the Dark
- **QuillSpell** — spelling craft through the Word Wizard cast
- **SynaForge** — sensory-affirming creative tools through Lull, Soften, and the Quiet that is Also Creating

Methodology

Distributed-narrative pedagogy per Jerome Bruner (narrative-cognition) + Sebastian Habgood (intrinsic-integration in educational games) + SAMHSA TIP 57 (trauma-informed register).

Trauma-informed-design framework per Eggleston et al. (2025) and Stoltenburg et al. (2024).

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