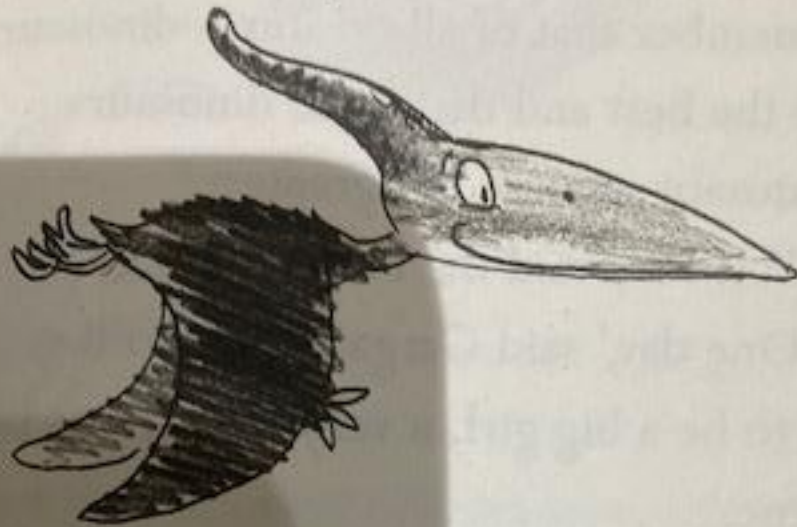


Chapter Five



'Ma,' said the baby apatosaurus, 'what were those funny things in the sky?'

'Pterodactyls,' replied her mother, whose name was Gargantua.

'I was frightened,' said the baby.

'No need,' said Gargantua.

'Pterodactyls are fourth-rate creatures, much inferior to us.'

'Why?'

'They've only got two legs. They can't walk about like we dinosaurs can. Just remember that of all creatures dinosaurs are the best and that of all dinosaurs apatosauruses are the greatest.'

'Yes, Ma,' said the baby.

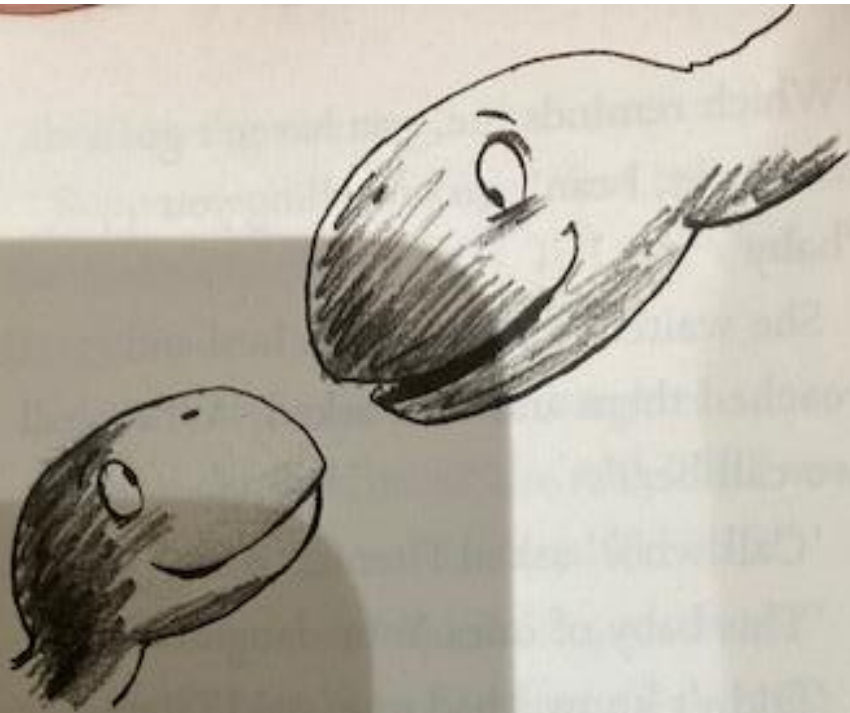
'One day,' said Gargantua, 'you'll grow up to be a big girl, a very big girl, as big as me.'

'And then I won't be frightened of anything, Ma?'

Gargantua looked down at her small daughter.

'Certainly not,' she said.

No point in worrying her, she thought. With a bit of luck she may never meet a T. rex.



Just then another apatosaurus, even bigger than Gargantua, plodded heavily towards them.

'Oh, look!' said Gargantua. 'Here comes your father,' and she called, 'Titanic!'

'What does that mean, Ma?' asked the baby.

'It's his name, dear,' replied Gargantua.

'Which reminds me, you haven't got a name yet. I can't go on calling you "baby".'

She waited until her huge husband reached them and then asked, 'What shall we call her?'

'Call who?' asked Titanic.

'This baby of ours. Your daughter.'

'Didn't know I had one,' said Titanic.

'Well, now you do. Say hullo to your father, baby.'

'Hullo, Pa,' said the little apatosaurus.

'Hullo, Wotsyername,' said Titanic.

'What's she called, Gargy?'

'She hasn't got a name yet. Can you think of one?'

'She's very small,' said Titanic.

'She's very young,' said Gargantua.

'She'll be big one day.'

'Suppose so,' said Titanic. 'But just now she looks a bantamweight. Tell you what, Gargy, let's call her Banty.'

Gargantua turned to her daughter.

'How about that, baby?' she said. 'Shall we call you Banty? How would you like that?'

'I don't mind,' said the little apatosaurus.

She looked up at her enormous parents. Shall I really be as big as them one day, she thought? Shall I have four great legs like pillars and a very long tail and a very very long neck?

She looked carefully at their heads.

'Why are your nostrils so high up?' she asked.

'So that we can stand in very deep water, almost completely submerged, and

yet still be able to breathe,' said her mother.

'But why would you want to stand in very deep water?'

'To get cool,' replied her father.

And to escape from a T. rex, he thought, but no point in worrying the child with that. With a bit of luck she may never meet one.

'Talking of which,' he went on, 'I could do with a dip. I'm hot and I'm hungry. I could murder a good meal of waterweed.'



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So they plodded off towards the lake,
where Banty stood in the shallows,
watching as Titanic and Gargantua
plunged their long necks deep under the
water to pull up great mouthfuls of weed.

She looked up into the sky, remembering
the flying creatures she had seen. I wonder
why Ma was so nasty about pterodactyls,
she said to herself. I thought they were
interesting, specially the little one. It was
rather sweet.

Meanwhile Nosy and Clawed and Aviatrix
had arrived back at their perch in the
woods. Upside down, Nosy looked at the
ground below, remembering the
apatosaurus and its baby. It was rather
sweet, he thought. Wonder why Mum and

Daddy were so nasty about apatosauruses. I thought they were interesting. I'd like to meet that little one again.

Early next morning, while his parents were still asleep, Nosy dropped off the branch and flew away in the direction of the Great Plain. Which is beyond the lake, he said to himself, and I can't miss that.

Sure enough, before long he saw beneath him the great sheet of water. Round its edges a number of dinosaurs were drinking – diplodocuses, ankylosauruses, stegosauruses and many others – but Nosy could not see the apatosaurus family.

This was not surprising, since all that was showing of them were, in deep water, the nostrils of Gargantua and



Titanic, and in the shallows, where she was practising going underwater, the very small nostrils of their child.

By a lucky chance, Banty popped her head up as the young pterodactyl was flapping by.

That's it, thought Nosy, that's the one, I'm sure, and he dropped lower and called out, 'Good morning!'

Banty waded out of the water and stood looking up at him.

'Good morning,' she said. 'You're a pterodactyl, aren't you?'

'Yes,' replied Nosy. 'And you're an apatosaurus. Excuse me asking, but what's your name?'

'Banty. What's yours?'

'Nosy.'

'Oh. Are you a girl or a boy?'

'Boy. And you?'

'Girl.'

'It's strange,' said Nosy, 'but my mum and daddy are very rude about apatosauruses.'

'Why?'

'Because you can't fly.'

'Oh,' said Banty. 'Well, funnily enough

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my ma and pa are very rude about pterodactyls.'

'Why?'

'Because you've only got two legs, so you can't walk.'

'But I don't want to walk,' said Nosy.

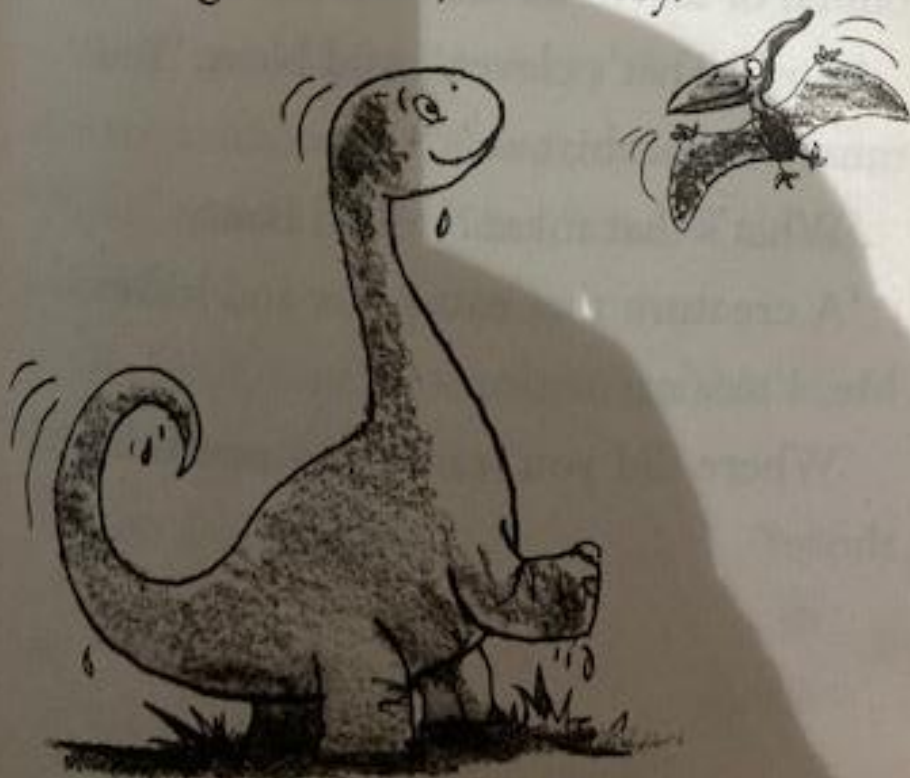
'Flying's nicer.'

'And I don't want to fly,' said Banty.

'Walking's nicer.'

They looked at one another with interest.

'Talking's nice too,' said Nosy.



'Yes, it is,' said Banty, 'but it must be tiring for you to keep flapping about, Nosy, while I'm standing comfortably.'

'No problem, Banty,' said Nosy. 'If you'll just walk over to this tree that overhangs the water,' and he grasped a convenient branch with his little claws and swung over to hang upside down.

'Wow! That's cute!' said Banty, and she stretched up her little neck and pulled a bunch of leaves off the branch.

'Gosh! That's clever!' said Nosy. 'You must be a herbivore.'

'What's that mean?' asked Banty.

'A creature that eats grass and leaves. Me, I'm a carnivore.'

'Where did you learn long words like those?'

'From my mum. She knows lots of long words. She's clever, my mum.'

'So's my ma,' said Banty.

'What about your father?' asked Nosy.

'He's not all that bright.'

'Nor's my daddy. Perhaps females are always cleverer than males. What do you think?'

'I don't think that's true,' said Banty.

'It's obvious to me that you are a much brighter dinosaur than I am.'

'Well, actually,' said Nosy, 'I'm not strictly a dinosaur. I'm a pterosaur. "Pteron" means a wing and "saurus" means a lizard.'

'Oh. Well, what does the "dino" bit of dinosaur mean?'

'Huge and terrible.'

'Wow! I like it!' said Banty.

She looked round at the sound of a mighty splashing in the lake.

'Here come Ma and Pa,' she said. 'You better beat it, Nosy, before they start being rude about you. But come back another day, won't you?'

'I will,' said Nosy as he dropped off his branch.

'See you, my friend!' he squeaked as he flew away.